"WEITER DURCH DIE ZEIT": PAST MEETS PRESENT IN UWE JOHNSON'S JAHRESTAGE AND THE NEW YORK TIMES

By

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by

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To Jim

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Uwe Johnson's post-war novel, Jahrestage. Aus dem Leben von Gesine Cresspahl, chronicles Gesine Cresspahl's search for meaning and identity amidst the uncertainty and upheaval which define her experiences in the U.S. during the late 1960s. In the course of one calendar year, beginning August 21, 1967, Gesine systematically takes stock of her life, herself, and the world around her.

The New York Times provides the thematic and narrative structure within which her reconstruction of life under Nazi dictatorship and DDR Socialism unfolds. Pivotal events from 1967/8 structure the novel formally and thematically. News items illustrating various domestic issues such as the Vietnam War, racial tensions, escalating urban crime and poverty are woven into the narrative. And although she is in another country an ocean away, Gesine is constantly confronted with reminders of Fascist Germany

and failed Socialism in the Eastern Block. The simultaneous explorations of past and present brings her to question the fundamental assumptions upon which her sense of truth and reality are based.

The New York Times seems to provide Gesine with "an objective window on the world." But a closer examination of the original articles reveals how Johnson manipulates documentary materials to fit his narrative purpose. The text implies through both language and format that the cited newspapers items are accurate representations of the source material when in fact they are highly edited versions of the original event. In numerous instances Johnson takes deliberate liberties with translation, juxtaposes elements from different articles, and places exaggerated emphasis on items buried in the depths of the paper. Thus, highly crafted and seamless versions of news items are presented as objective documentary material, while their presentation, relevance and impact are in fact orchestrated by the narrator. Both the newspaper and Gesine have specific agendas in determining "all the news fit to print." Her political and social ideologies, which are not stated directly in the text itself, emerge clearly in the comparison between Jahrestage and The New York Times.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: "GESINE . . . MANCHMAL VERSTEHST DU DAS LAND NICHT, IN DEM WIR DOCH LEBEN"

Unlike many literary works written during the period spanning the post-war era to the present, Uwe Johnson's epochal four volume novel, Jahrestage. Aus dem Leben von Gesine Cresspahl (1970-1983)[1] is not tied solely to the political and social realities of a divided Germany, nor to its recent past. However, the tetralogy to date has been read primarily as a novel chronicling the history of a Mecklenburg family in the Weimar Republic through the DDR's *Aufbau* period. This reading is, to an extent, justified. Johnson's detailed portrayal of early post-war East Germany in Jahrestage's fourth volume is unique both as a work of fiction and as an historical document: "Da hat die Einigung einmal auch ihr literarisch Gutes: Endlich können Ostdeutsche die Bücher des schon 1959 in den Westen gegangenen Autors lesen, der wie kein anderer die Geschichte des

[1] The first three volumes of Jahrestage. Aus dem Leben von Gesine Cresspahl (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1970, 1972, 1973, 1983) were published separately. The concluding volume took Johnson another ten years to complete. The novel was originally conceived as a trilogy, as indicated by Johnson's note at the end of Vol. II which refers to the sequel "der nächste und letzte Teil dieses Buches..." (II, 1009). The third volume, however, documents Gesine's story only through July 19, 1968. The dust cover text ends with the ironic note to the reader: "Nächstes Jahr, wie üblich, mehr." This prediction proved to be premature as Johnson fell victim to "one of the most highly publicized writer's blocks in modern literary history" (Theodore Ziolkowski, "Living with Germany on Riverside Drive," New York Times 8 Nov. 1987: 61). For reasons both personal and physical, which have been adequately addressed elsewhere by Johnson (Skizze eines Verunglückten, and Begleitumstände. Frankfurter Vorlesungen), as well as in the secondary literature, Johnson was unable to proceed with Jahrestage for most of the next decade.

östlichen Halbstaats geschrieben hat, mit der Treue eines Chronisten, mit der oft ironisch geflügelten Phantasie eines Erfinders von Menschen und Schicksalen."[2] The novel is undeniably a result of a particular set of social and historical conditions which defined Germany during the first half of the century. However, such one-sided consideration of Jahrestage is clearly limited in that it glosses over the novel's distinctly American setting.

In many regards Jahrestage is of particular significance to the non-German reader. It is easily the most encompassing and detailed treatment of modern America in the post-war era by a German author. Gesine Cresspahl's narrative is divided between recent historical events and twelve turbulent months in 1967/8 during which she is living in the U.S. The novel's contemporary strand is set in the quintessential American metropolis, New York City. Details of national and world events are supplied by the nation's premier newspaper, The New York Times.

In the course of Jahrestage Johnson weaves the bulk of twentieth century German history into the narrative framework of a calendar year in the life of DDR expatriate, Gesine Cresspahl. Since the death of Jakob Abs, the pivotal event of Johnson's first novel, Mutmaßungen über Jakob (1959), Gesine has emigrated with their child to the United States. Johnson picks up the thread of her story some ten years later in New York, where she has resided since 1961. The novel's 1,900 pages of interwoven narrative and documentary material has been described as "an ample balance sheet for the best part of the writer's fictional estate, a colossal exercise in

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[2] Rolf Michaelis, "Geselliger Einzelgänger," Die Zeit 29 Apr. 1994: 13.

synchronic timekeeping and diachronic memory"[3] with which the author "legt . . . alles, was er weiß und kann, auf die Waage."[4] The premise of the narrative structure is a one-year agreement Gesine has made with her narrative partner, Johnson's fictional narrative persona "Genosse Schriftsteller." In the course of the year, Gesine takes stock of her life, herself, and the world around her, and in the process compiles a detailed catalog of her experiences ("eine Bewußtseinsinventur").[5] Throughout Johnson's "novel of consciousness"[6] the narrative combines diverse materials taken from Gesine's external and internal realities: conversations, newspaper articles, poems, slogans and scores of musing mini-digressions. As she shifts abruptly between past and present, as well as between historical and personal arenas of experience, Gesine's unassimilated childhood memories of Nazi Germany and the DDR alternate with scenes of New York City life and a larger sociopolitical reality represented by The New York Times. In the narrative the proximity

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[3] Wilfried van der Will, "Approaches to Reality Through Narrative Perspectives in Johnson's Prose," The Modern German Novel, ed. Keith Bullivant (New York: Berg, 1987) 192.

[4] Peter Demetz, "Uwe Johnsons Blick in die Epoche," Johnsons " Jahrestage," ed. Michael Bengel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1985) 194.

[5] From the title of Dieter E. Zimmer's interview with Johnson, "Eine Bewußtseinsinventur. Das Gespräch mit dem Autor: Uwe Johnson." Johnsons "Jahrestage" 99. Johnson, in the guise of Marie Cresspahl, elaborates elsewhere: "Von mir ist in dem Buch nur, was meine Mutter zwischen dem 20. August 1967 und dem 20. August 1968 an mir gesehen hat. Was sie hörte. Was sie erinnerte. Was sie für mich fürchtete. Was sie wissen konnte von einem Kind das allmählich elf Jahre alt wurde. Was--what was in her mind then. On her mind, too. In ihrem Bewußtsein" (Uwe Johnson, "Interview with Marie H. Cresspahl 2.-3. Januar 1972," Johnsons "Jahrestage," 73).

[6] Judith Ryan, The Uncompleted Past (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1983) 156.

of these multiple realities, which have no direct correspondence to each other, form their own subtext.

For a continuous 365 days, beginning on August 21, 1967, Johnson chronicles Gesine's story in minute detail "wo sie herkommt, d.h. was für Leute und was für Dinge es waren, die sie zu dem gemacht haben, was sie heute ist."[7] Gesine's intensive effort at the reconstruction and reinterpretation of the past represents an exhaustive examination of Germany in the twentieth century. Confronting the past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) is an integral step in her search for identity and self-determination. Unfolding parallel to the reconstructive narrative are the political and social crises which define the American Vietnam War era. Escalating involvement in Southeast Asia is coupled with decreasing public support of the war effort. Racial tensions at home, along with increased crime and violence in the inner city signal the disintegration of urban America to many observers .

In the late summer of 1967 Gesine is living with her eleven year-old daughter, Marie, in a rent-controlled apartment at Riverside Drive and 96th Street in Manhattan's Upper West Side. The flat comes complete with an idyllic view of the Hudson River and a neighboring park. The realities of parenthood have led Gesine to make some hard choices. In light of her new priorities she has adopted a new maxim, which goes against everything she learned in school: ". . . je dichter ich rangehe ans Geld, desto sicherer

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[7] Horst Lehner, "Die letzten 123 Tage im Leben der Gesine Cresspahl? Ein Gespräch mit Uwe Johnson über den dritten Band der 'Jahrestage.'" Johnsons "Jahrestage" 107. Johnson's description here of the novel's theme echoes a similar leitmotif in Christa Wolf's novel, Kindheitsmuster: "Wie sind wir so geworden wie wir heute sind?" (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1979) 196.

ist es."[8] Following the money, she eventually lands in the antithesis of socialist society, New York City. Since emigrating from Düsseldorf in 1962, Gesine has been working as a secretary in the international division of a large midtown Manhattan bank. She has managed to build a seemingly stable and secure life for herself and her daughter. Her European background, knowledge of languages and work ethic ("Auffallen durch Fleiß")[9] eventually lead to an assignment which would have a profound effect on her future. Gesine's boss, De Rosny, senses a lucrative money-making opportunity in the Czechoslovakian reform movement, and wants her to assist him in arranging a hard currency loan to the cash-strapped government. In contrast to her boss's pragmatic motivations, Gesine's interest in the project is ideological. After a series of bitter disappointments with Russian-style communism and the DDR's "Arbeiter- und Bauernstaat," Gesine sees in Czechoslovakia's efforts to reestablish financial and economical ties with the West the possibility of a new type of socialism, which combines socialist and democratic principles--a utopian "dritter Weg." Czech leader Alexander Dubcek envisioned it as "socialism with a human face." Gesine plans an initial three-month trip to Prague to lay the groundwork for this promising new monetary relationship between De Rosny's bank and the Czechoslovakian government. Ironically, she departs for Prague on August 20, 1968, the eve of the Russian invasion which brings an abrupt end to the Prague Spring. Unlike the reader, Gesine is blissfully unaware of what awaits her at the end of her journey. The novel ends before her arrival. Although the events of August 21 lie

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[8] Uwe Johnson, "Einführung in die 'Jahrestage,'" Johnsons "Jahrestage" 22.

[9] Johnson, "Einführung in die 'Jahrestage'" 22.

outside the parameters of the novel itself, they overshadow the otherwise seemingly idyllic conclusion of Gesine's narrative contract with Johnson. The disastrous beginning of what would be a new calendar year is strongly implied by the novel's rigid chronological structure and is also anticipated thematically.

Early in Johnson's career critic Günter Blöcker dubbed him "der Dichter der beiden Deutschland."[10] The designation stuck. However, Johnson found this to be an unfortunate accolade which was misleading, limiting, and increasingly irritating. Jahrestage represents a conscious effort on Johnson's part to distance himself from what he considered a very narrow reading of his fiction.[11] Although all of his novels play out against the background of a divided Germany, Johnson considered his preoccupation with the extraordinary problems resulting from an unnatural political situation to be simply the unstudied result of his life experience, "die einem Schriftsteller für seinen Fall gerade zwei verschiedene deutsche Erfahrungen zugewiesen hat, als sein Material."[12] Ironically, since 1990 Johnson has emerged as one of the most important articulators of the DDR experience. German unification has brought Johnson's work to the fore as the tool well-suited to what Norbert

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[10] Günter Blöcker, Kritisches Lesebuch (Hamburg, 1962) 196.

[11] Johnson describes how his first two published novels, Mutmaßungen über Jakob and Das dritte Buch über Achim brought about this dubious honor: ". . . allmählich begann ich das nicht mehr amüsant zu finden, sondern für ein Mißverständnis zu halten, denn mir kam es ja auf die Geschichte an, die ich erzählen wollte, und auf die Leute, die diese Geschichte machten: Nun war das ein politisches Konzept geworden. Das erdrückte mir die Luft und das Leben und den Geruch und das Tempo dieser Geschichte." His third novel, Zwei Ansichten, whose two main characters Johnson considered more than just star-crossed lovers separated by the Berlin Wall, sealed his fate in the German press as "Fachmann der deutschen Teilung" (Johnson, "Einführung in die 'Jahrestage'"16).

[12] Uwe Johnson, Begleitumstände (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1980) 337.

Mecklenburg describes as "literarische Archäologie jenes deutschen Teilstaates."[13] Descriptions of the DDR's early *Aufbau* phase in the second half of Jahrestage are among the few existing literary works which describe this period in detail. Since Johnson was not subject to the same censorship as his contemporaries in the DDR, Jahrestage today has assumed a critical role in chronicling a repressed historical phase for which there are few existing sources with any degree of objectivity.

Johnson was one of the few East German writers who continued to write about the country he unwillingly left behind: "Das Hauptwerk Jahrestage schließlich enthält mit dem dritten und ganz besonders mit dem vierten Band eine einzigartige erzählerische Abrechnung mit der Geschichte der frühen DDR, eine Darstellung, deren historiographische Dignität erst jetzt richtig wird entdeckt und geprüft werden können."[14] Grass characterizes this aspect of Johnson's prose as "die genaueste Geschichtsschreibung--wie sie kein Historiker leisten kann--über das Entstehen der DDR. . . . Dieser Übergang aus der Zonengesellschaft in die DDR ist von keinem anderen Autor so akribisch und dennoch literarisch gestaltet worden."[15] For Gesine, steadfast adherence to the ideals internalized during the fledgling period of German socialism eventually brings her full circle. Like his protagonist, Johnson's early experience in the DDR shaped his relationships, political convictions and sense of

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[13] Norbert Mecklenburg, "Uwe Johnson als Autor einiger deutscher Literaturen," Literature für Leser 1 (1991): 1.

[14] Mecklenburg, "Uwe Johnson als Autor einiger deutscher Literaturen" 5.

[15] Roland Berbig, "Distanz, heftige Nähe, Fremdwerden und Fremdbleiben. Günter Grass im Gespräch über Uwe Johnson." "Wo ich her bin . . ." Uwe Johnson in der DDR, eds. Roland Berbig and Erdmut Wizisla (Berlin: KONTEXTverlag, 1993) 99.

identity. Ultimately, it had a profound influence on life's most crucial decisions.

Johnson considered himself neither an historical writer nor a particularly political one. His critics are divided on this point.[16] According to Peter Beckes, Gesine "will . . . weder eine persönliche Vergangenheitsbewältigung leisten, noch mechklenburgische Heimat nostalgisch feiern."[17] Sarah Lennox, on the other hand, argues that Johnson's deliberate manipulation of information from The New York Times results in a skewed and highly politicized representation of the U.S in the novel: "Gesine's a priori determination that political practice is purposeless has many consequences for the content of Jahrestage, and what readers are allowed to learn about political activities in the United States and Europe during 1967-8."[18] Regardless of Johnson's own statements to the contrary, the political component of his writing is inescapable. The link between the individual and the prevalent political reality emerges as the central theme in his writing. He notes in one interview that, "it is hardly possible to live on the outskirts of history."[19] The ideologies, as well as the real-world manifestations, of twentieth century European history form the background of his novels.

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[16] Johnson was by far the most thorough collector of Jahrestage criticism. See Begleitumstände 429-35.

[17] Peter Beckes,"Gefällt dir das Land nicht, such dir ein anderes," Text + Kritik 65/66 (1980): 69.

[18] Sara Lennox, "History in Uwe Johnson's 'Jahrestage,'" Germanic Review 64 (1989): 35.

[19] A. Leslie Willson, "'An unacknowledged humorist': An Interview with Uwe Johnson. Sheerness-in-Kent, 20 April 1982," Dimension. Contemporary German Arts and Letters 15 (1982): 402.

Compared to many of his contemporaries, including fellow Gruppe 47 members Heinrich Böll, Günter Grass, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Peter Weiss, Martin Walser and dramatist Rolf Hochhuth, Johnson is far less outspoken on political topics. His novels all address difficult political issues, but he does not advocate a particular political agenda. In his only essay on the novel he contends that literature is unsuited to political engagement:

> Ein Roman ist keine revolutionäre Waffe. Er bringt nicht unmittelbare politische Wirkung hervor. Die taktischen Aussichten sind ärmlich, strategische kaum nachweisbar.[20]

Johnson prefers to explore alternative political realities (*alternative Wirklichkeiten*) in his novels. He sees literature as a means with which to challenge an existing situation:

> Zu prüfen wäre da nicht nur das Bewußtsein, in dem wir erkennen: so leben wir. Stimmt. Auch ein anderes, das der Frage hilft: Aber wollen wir so leben? Stimmt das?[21]

For Johnson's characters, the definitive social and moral issue of the post-war period is the struggle to preserve personal integrity. This in turn necessitates the assumption of individual responsibility. Like many post-war writers Johnson assumes the inseparability of a literary work from its political and historical context--specifically that of the Third Reich and a divided Germany. At the same time he refrains from overt political declarations. His novels, though rich in political material, neither present solutions nor propose specific courses of action.

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[20] Uwe Johnson, "Vorschläge zur Prüfung eines Romans," Uwe Johnson, eds. Rainer Gerlach and Matthias Richter (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1984) 35.

[21] Johnson, "Vorschläge zur Prüfung eines Romans" 33.

Gesine's continued passivity during a particularly turbulent period in U.S. history is typical of Johnson's characters. Despite an acute sense of moral conviction, she cannot bring herself to act. The protagonists of Mutmaßungen über Jakob and Das dritte Buch über Achim (1961), are likewise both critical observers of a divided Germany's highly politicized society. Jakob, a railway dispatcher, and Karsch, a journalist from Hamburg, are impaired by an overwhelming sense of impotence. All three are quite ordinary people whose convictions have resulted in their alienation from mainstream society. Lacking in power and influence, they are essentially passive figures whose decisions and actions (*Alternativen*) are dictated by prevailing sociopolitical circumstances.

The essay, "Berliner Stadtbahn" (1961),[22] is one of the few instances in which Johnson elaborates on problems of narrative and politics. In it Johnson analyzes Germany's post-war politization and its literary implications. The essay begins with a statement of "anti-narration": "Erlauben Sie mir, unter diesem Titel zu berichten über einige Schwierigkeiten, die mich hinderten einen Stadtbahnhof in Berlin zu beschreiben" (BS, 7). The political implications of a divided Germany prohibit an objective depiction of a station in Berlin. The opening paragraph contains the only empirical statement given in the text. Johnson observes a young East German as he disembarks at a train station in West Berlin, walks across the platform and exits onto the street: "Da tritt unter vielen anderen eine einzelne Person aus dem eingefahrenen Zug, überschreitet den Bahnsteig und verläßt ihn zur Straße hin" (BS, 7). This single statement of fact becomes a motif which recurs in a modulated form

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22 Uwe Johnson, "Berliner Stadtbahn," Berliner Sachen. Aufsätze (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1985). The abbreviation "BS" is used for subsequent references to the text.

throughout the essay. This single observation generates a chain of speculation and conjecture. There are no visual cues to determine whether the trip is an ordinary commute or a political gesture. Thus, a commonplace occurrence becomes saturated with meaning given the existing political situation. In the final paragraph Johnson sums up what he perceives as the central problem: "Hoffentlich habe ich die Schwierigkeiten mit einem Bahnhof der Berliner Stadtbahn dennoch so beschrieben, daß Sie ihn sich ungefähr vorstellen können" (BS, 21). The essay is, in fact, an argument for the redundancy of narrative objectivity in a divided Germany. Although Johnson documents the process in detail, he is unable to gain any insight into the event. Its significance changes with each shift in political context.

Johnson identifies Berlin as the embodiment of Germany's post-war situation. The city's former image as a cosmopolitan political, commercial and cultural center--the *Erscheinungsbild der Stadt*--has been supplanted by a new political reality:

> Die Grenze zerlegt den Begriff. Sie kann nicht als Kenntnis vorausgesetzt werden. Zwar ist bekannt, daß das Gebiet der ehemaligen deutschen Hauptstadt wie eine Insel vom ostdeutschen Staat umschlossen liegt und daß die Insel wiederum geteilt ist. Um jene Hälfte, die von den Armeen der Vereinigten Staaten, Großbritanniens und Frankreichs beaufsichtigt wird, ist die frühere Verwaltungsgrenze hart geworden, wie lebendige Haut verhornen kann und nicht mehr atmet. Sie ist wirtschaftlich und politisch isoliert. (BS, 8)

In the post-war world Berlin has also come to symbolize the global realignment into opposing capitalist and socialist camps. The city embodies two ideologies which are "nicht durch Logik verbunden, sondern durch eine Grenze" (BS, 12).

The politization of everyday existence is an inescapable fact of life in modern Germany:

> Es gibt nicht: Berlin. Es sind zwei Städte Berlin, die nach der bebauten Fläche und der Einwohnerzahl vergleichbar sind. Berlin zu sagen ist vage und vielmehr eine politische Forderung. . . . (BS, 9)

The city's cultural and political significance has been reduced to one single factor. It has become "ein Modell für die Begegnung der beiden Ordnungen," which are situated "so eng nebeneinander, daß sie einander nicht aus dem Blick verlieren können und einander berühren müssen" (BS, 10). The influences of divergent political systems and ideologies on a common language and culture create opposing realms of existence:

> Es kommt denn hinzu, daß beide Machtapparate ihre eigenen sprachlichen Verabredungen getroffen haben und sie in ihrem Gebiet teilweise als Konvention durchsetzen konnten. Beide Städte Berlin nennen sich frei einander unfrei, sich demokratisch einander undemokratisch, sich friedlich einander kriegslüstern usw. Einige dieser diffusen Formeln sind tatsächlich sprachgängig geworden und werden oft ohne Ironie angesetzt. (BS 19)

Each of the political systems, "nach denen heute in der Welt gelebt werden kann" (BS, 10), relies on a distorted view of reality. Germany's sociopolitical reality consists of the contentious co-existence the two opposing systems. Johnson's goal is to create a literature which "die beiden Gegenden in einen Griff bekommt und zudem überregional ist" (BS, 20).

Johnson contends that both reader and writer have become desensitized to an unacceptable situation. Assumptions and biases are deeply ingrained in the German postwar mentality. The irony of Berlin's unnatural situation has dissipated in the face of a seemingly unalterable political reality. Just as the city represents two competing political

realities, Johnson precludes the domination of any single ideology by utilizing a multiplicity of narrative viewpoints.

Using the simple example of a man at a train station, Johnson explores a theme which suffuses his entire œuvre. Each of his novels unfolds within a specific social, political and historical context His characters experience sociopolitical reality as a complex web of systems, institutions and language from which they attempt to extricate themselves. R.Hinton Thomas and Wilfried van der Will contend that the writer is subject to these same influences and constraints:

> . . . insofern sie den Schriftsteller bedrängt, anregt, herausfordert, kurz: insofern sie in ihm Bewußtsein produziert. In dieser zweiten Bedeutung mag Gesellschaft zwar als ein den Schriftsteller determinierendes komplexes Großmilieu verstanden werden, aber doch als ein solches, das ihn um Spiel seiner Reflexionen und Einbildungen befreit.[23]

The reader is similarly affected by the sociopolitical environment. In the interactive exchange between author and reader the narrative becomes a tool in a "Denkprozeß, als Mittel der Wahrheitsfindung."[24] Ideally, this prods the reader to question his or her own assumptions. The function of this narrative model is not to replace reality but to illuminate it:

> Wozu also taugt der Roman? Er ist ein Angebot. Sie bekommen eine Version der Wirklichkeit. Es ist nicht eine Gesellschaft in der Miniatur, und es ist kein maßstäbliches Modell. Es ist auch nicht ein Spiegel der Welt und weiterhin nicht ihre Widerspiegelung; es ist eine Welt, gegen die Welt zu halten. Sie sind eingeladen, diese Version der Wirklichkeit zu vergleichen mit jener,

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[23] R. Hinton Thomas and Wilfried van der Will, Der deutsche Roman und die Wohlstandsgesellschaft (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1969) 152.

[24] Manfred Durzak, Der deutsche Roman der Gegenwart. Entwicklungsvoraussetuzungen und Tendenzen (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1979) 339.

> die Sie unterhalten und pflegen. Vielleicht paßt der andere, der unterschiedliche Blick in die Ihre hinein.[25]

Johnson consistently argues that his fiction is intended neither as an exact reflection of reality nor as its utopian projection. An approximation of reality arises from collaboration of narrative viewpoints, by which the reader's own experiences and convictions can be measured. The negotiation of an alternate reality is part of the ongoing exchange between narrator and reader: "So wird Schreiben praktiziert als Infragestellung schlechthin."[26]

Johnson has often been criticized for his meticulous--sometimes described as tedious--attention to everyday details while neglecting plot and character development. Günter Blöcker describes Johnson as "der Registrator und Vermesser Johnson, der Mann, der nichts ausläßt."[27] The traditional role of narrative (i.e. storytelling) is subordinated in Johnson's fiction to the demands of creating this "gesellschaftliches Modell":

> Das Romane-Schreiben kann auch Geschichten-Erzählen sein. Für mich ist da aber noch etwas anderes dabei, nämlich der Versuch, ein gesellschaftliches Modell herzustellen. Das Modell besteht allerdings aus Personen. . . . Mit diesen Personen versuche ich ein Bild der Gesellschaft zu geben. Das heißt: durch die Personen, durch das, was ihnen so passiert ist und passieren kann, und was die Gesellschaft ihnen für Mittel gegeben hat, um diesen Ereignissen zu widerstehen. Daraus entsteht dann eine Geschichte der

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25 Johnson "Vorschläge zur Prüfung eines Romans" 35.

26 Ingeborg Hoesterey, "Die Erzählsituation als Roman. Uwe Johnsons 'Jahrestage,'" Colloquia Germanica. Internationale Zeitschrift für germanische Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft 16 (1983): 24.

27 Günter Blöcker, "Prager Traum--New Yorker Wirklichkeit," Johnsons "Jahrestage," 164.

> Personen und, so hoffe ich, auch eine Geschichte der Gesellschaft.[28]

The passages portraying the physical surroundings in Jahrestage are meticulously detailed. Marie builds a replica of Gesine's childhood home based on her mother's descriptions. No aspect of New York escapes the notice of Gesine and her narrative partner, however trivial: train schedules, subway maps, advertisements on the side of a bus.

In the historical narrative Johnson presents a complex version of social reality through the story of Jerichow and its inhabitants. He also draws on events and characters from earlier novels such as Ingrid Barbendererde, Mutmaßungen über Jakob, Das dritte Buch über Achim and Karsch und andere Prosa. Johnson's long term interest in specific characters, notably Gesine and Heinrich Cresspahl, give a depth and continuity to his complete works rarely found in literature:

> In Johnsons früheren Werken bereitet sich jeweils die Problemstellung der späteren vor (s.o.); doch gilt auch umgekehrt, daß im Spätwerk das frühere kommentiert und entschlüsselt, als die Bedeutungseinheit eines Gesamtwerkes hergestellt wird.[29]

Heinrich Cresspahl's brief career as a British spy during the war, the death of Gesine's mother, details of life in Jerichow during the Nazi dictatorship and the Russian Occupation, the childhood relationship between Jakob and Gesine, and Jakob's last visit with her before his death are just a few examples of events alluded to in other works which are developed in Jahrestage.

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[28] Christof Schmid, "Gespräch mit Uwe Johnson (am 29.7.1971 in West-Berlin)," "Ich überlege mir die Geschichte . . ." Uwe Johnson im Gespräch, ed. Eberhard Fahlke (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1988) 253.

[29] Walter Schmitz, Uwe Johnson (München: Beck, 1984) 84.

Johnson's first novel, Ingrid Barbendererde (1985), was first published posthumously.[30] This early work is significant in that it addresses those thematic elements which define Johnson's writing over a lifetime: the conflicting relationship between political reality and the individual and the resulting alienation from society. The novel was written between 1953 and 1956 while Johnson was a "Student der Germanistik und 'weiterer Folgen des Krieges'" at the University of Rostock.[31] Shortly before the completion of secondary school, Ingrid becomes enmeshed in the conflict between the government and the members of a church-affiliated group, the "Junge Gemeinde." What begins as a classroom protest against "veränderten Lehrstoff"--specifically the socialist tenets of dialectics, class conflict and historical materialism--and for individual freedom of thought quickly escalates into a perceived attack on the system. As a result Ingrid is accused of subversive activity, and is called before a school tribunal:

> Sie wird am Mittwoch, 13. Mai 1953 im Verfahren gegen die Junge Gemeinde aus der FDJ ausgeschlossen. Mit 289 gegen 17 Stimmen. Ihr ist das Betreten des Schulgeländes ab sofort verboten. Für eine Rede. Für bloß eine Rede.[32]

After being expelled, she flees East Germany to "das andere Deutschland" with friend and classmate, Klaus Niebuhr:

> - Wir werden ja sehen was an diesem ist: sagte Klaus. Sie würden ja sehen was an diesem war. Ob sie es

[30] The novel was originally rejected for publication by the Aufbau-Verlag because of controversial political elements: "Der Verlag schätzte die literarischen Qualitäten dieses Romans, aber wünschte sich einige Änderungen politischer Natur, eigentlich mehr innenpolitischer Natur, und dazu hätte ich mein Bewußtsein ändern müssen, das konnte ich nicht. Da nahm ich das Manuskript zurück." The manuscript was long assumed lost. Horst Bienek, Werkstattgespräche mit Schrifstellern (München: Carl Hanser, 1962) 87.

[31] Siegfried Unseld, "Nachwort: Die Prüfung der Reife im Jahre 1953," Ingrid Barbendererde (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1985) 251.

[32] Johnson, Begleitumstände 83.

> vergessen hatten über ein Jahr, und ob das schlimm sein würde.[33]

Their defection to the West is not perceived as a political statement, but simply the substitution of one unsatisfactory alternative for another.

The novel which launched Johnson's literary career, Mutmaßungen über Jakob, opens with the death of the title figure. The novel's well known beginning--"Aber Jakob ist immer quer über die Gleise gegangen"--initiates a reconstruction of the events leading up to that moment. He is killed in a moment of distraction--or perhaps despair--on the morning he returns from West Germany, while crossing the tracks on a foggy November morning. In retrospect multiple narrators attempt to reconstruct an accurate account of what actually happened. They compile, compare and negotiate information. Their stories both corroborate and contradict each other. Contradictions within the story remain unresolved, which Johnson finds an accurate reflection of human experience:

> Der Verfasser sollte zugeben, daß er erfunden hat, was er vorbringt, er sollte nicht verschweigen, daß seine Informationen lückenhaft sind und ungenau. Denn er verlangt Geld für was er anbietet. Dies eingestehen kann er, indem er etwa die schwierige Suche nach der Wahrheit ausdrücklich vorführt, indem er seine Auffassung des Geschehens mit der seiner Person vergleicht und relativiert, indem er ausläßt, was er nicht wissen kann, indem er nicht für reine Kunst ausgibt, was noch eine Art der Wahrheitsfindung ist. (BS, 20-1)

Holes and contradictions in their theories are smoothed over with conjecture and speculation. The result is a continuously shifting version of reality.

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[33] Johnson, Ingrid Barbendererde 247.

The figure of Jakob gradually emerges from the tangled web of narrative as a socialist hero thrown into personal crisis during a period of political turmoil. In the latter half of 1956 a combination of events ushered in a brief--but doomed--period of liberalization in the Eastern Block which followed Nikita Khrushchev's speech at the XX Party Congress. At roughly the same time Imre Nagy initiated a program of democratic reforms in Hungary. The Suez crisis was also brewing. Soviet reaction to the Hungarian uprising was swift and brutal. Jakob's faith in the socialist state, along with any illusions of personal integrity and self-determination, are destroyed as he helplessly watches trainloads of Russian troops pass through his jurisdiction on their way to Budapest. Although he could hold up the transport temporarily, Jakob realizes that he cannot stop them indefinitely. His intervention would be futile.

Jakob subsequently visits his lover, Gesine, who is working in Düsseldorf as a translator at NATO headquarters. The reality of the BRD as experienced by Jakob is disappointing. Everything strikes him as crass, exaggerated and pretentious. He leaves West Germany disillusioned with both of the political alternatives available to him. He deliberately chooses to return to his work and his friends in an albeit fundamentally flawed society, but where he believes the potential for change still exists. He is killed the next morning. Gesine, as we later learn in Jahrestage, also leaves the BRD in reaction to an outbreak of anti-Semitic violence. While both East and West Germany are portrayed in the novel as severely compromised systems, socialism at least holds out the theoretical promise of social transformation and historical redemption.

When Karsch, a middle-aged journalist from Hamburg, crosses the border into East Germany just a few years later in May, 1960, the situation

between the two republics has changed entirely. The border is closed, and the estrangement between the two German states, already a decisive factor in Mutmaßungen über Jakob, is complete. That "in Deutschland liegt eine undurchlässige Grenze" (102) is to Karsch, however, a profound revelation. On a trip into uncharted territory he finds himself in a foreign country, though the surroundings are deceptively familiar. They may still speak the same language but any common ground they once shared has disappeared in the interim: ". . . er spricht die Sprache und kann sich nicht verständlich machen, sie haben da anderes Geld und andere Regierung: damit soll er sich eines Tages vereinigen" (A, 120). Karsch's extended stay in the DDR is the premise of the novel, Das dritte Buch über Achim.

Karsch is struggling with a third biography of the chameleon-like East German cycling star, Achim K. His subject is a national hero, a respected party member and parliamentary representative, and an otherwise model citizen of the socialist state. His research and the creative process, in which he explores several different narrative avenues, comprise the bulk of the novel. The reporter must sift through and evaluate mountains of information. He painstakingly selects those aspects of Achim's story which will "cohere into a meaningful pattern without distorting the general truth."[34] Achim's motivations, as well as those of the party, are entirely different. They envision a didactic biography that emphasizes the individual's role in socialist society, and which reaffirms the political status quo.

After three months of research the proposed project collapses despite the expenditure of much time and effort. Karsch's failure to produce a cohesive image of his subject is a result not only of the disparity between

[34] Mark Boulby, Uwe Johnson (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1974) 44.

Achim's personal and public image, but is also caused by the writer's own inflexible idealism. He is overwhelmed by information, and feels compelled to integrate all of it in order to provide a "true" picture of Achim. This proves an impossible task as problematic incidents come to his attention: Achim's active role in the Hitler Jugend, his betrayal of his social-democrat father to the authorities, and an illegal trip to West Berlin for a three-speed mechanism unavailable in the East.

The novel chronicles Karsch's failure to resolve the discrepancy between Achim's public and private personae. Johnson describes the narrative as a "Beschreibung einer Beschreibung, die Umstände einer Biographie und was in dieser Biographie enthalten sein sollte."[35] The relationship between the biographer and his subject collapses completely when Karsch confronts Achim with a photo which appears to substantiate rumors of his participation in the Berlin Workers' Uprising on June 17, 1953. Achim denies he was there, and Karsch can't be certain that the man in the photo is really Achim. Even seemingly concrete evidence proves questionable and ultimately inconclusive. After following a number of false leads, and faced with Achim's hostility, Karsch must ultimately conclude "daß die Schlüssigkeit eines Beweises beider Gesinnungsidentifikation unmöglich ist und nur in ein Netz unaufklärbarer Fragen führt."[36] Karsch abandons his project in despair and returns to Hamburg none the wiser about the "real" Achim.

Karsch's experiences are recounted from his necessarily West German perspective during a marathon telephone conversation upon his return. The interests and biases of his dialog partner, presumably a friend

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[35] Bienek 89.

[36] Thomas and van der Will 140.

in Hamburg, also shape and direct the narrative. Karsch analyzes the breakdown of the creative process as well as his own dual role as subject and narrator. At home Karsch is able to view his recent experience in the East from a substantial narrative distance, which "Karsch aus der Distanz zu einer fast fremden Figur objektiviert."[37] The change of scenery, however, does not translate into any measure of objectivity. He finds himself at a loss to explain anything of his experiences in the East, which remain uninterpretable in context of West German society. The question, "wie war es denn?" with which the novel opens and closes remains unanswered and unanswerable.

The novel's open-ended conclusion underlines Johnson's conviction that a "unified vision of reality is itself a fiction."[38] This same theme is further explored in the short story "Eine Reise wegwohin, 1960," in which Karsch tries again to make sense of his DDR experiences. Irrespective of the angle from which he approaches the problem, the formulation of a compromise between the two political alternatives proves unattainable. Opposing political, social, and historical factors make it impossible to synthesize a single definitive biography of Achim. The truth can only be approximated. Thus, the presentation of unreconciled and unresolvable paradoxes is in itself the most truthful portrayal of the existing situation. Friend and colleague, writer Wolfgang Koeppen, characterizes the search for truth as the driving force of Johnson's narrative:

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[37] Thomas and van der Will 141.

[38] Ryan 41.

> Johnson suchte die Wahrheit. Die Wahrheitssuche ist aber ein Prozeß, und erst wenn man ihn beschreibt, nähert man sich vielleicht der Wahrheit.[39]

According to Judith Ryan, "the idea of history as a product of individual perceptions becomes a central theme of the novel."[40] This view of history later becomes the organizing idea in Jahrestage, but on a much wider scale.

Johnson's third novel, Zwei Ansichten (1965), unfolds during the months immediately before and after the building of the Wall. The work sealed Johnson's fate in the German press as "Fachmann der deutschen Teilung." As the novel begins Berlin is a city in crisis; however the political separation is not yet physical. The narrative portrays the *alternative Wicklichkeiten* of two lovers: B., a West German photographer, and D., an East German nurse. They wake up one morning in August to find themselves on opposite sides of an armed border. It is obvious who belongs where. Just in case, the characters are neatly labeled to avoid any confusion. Initially their personal and political identities are inseparable. In the course of the novel, however, it is possible to point to a degree of personal development in D.'s character, while B. becomes increasingly mired in his slavery to materialism.

Every aspect of daily existence in Berlin--however trivial or personal--is affected by international *Realpolitik*. Like the two lovers, the city is inseparable from its political reality. It literally rests on the fault-line between the socialist East and the capitalist West. Its physical division is representative of the division evident in all aspects of German society. It is

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[39] Wolfgang Koeppen, "Ein Bruder der Massen war er nicht. Über Uwe Johnson," Gesammelte Werke, vol. VI (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1986) 426.

[40] Ryan 40.

the living embodiment of the Cold War. Johnson finds this division is insurmountable both on a political and on a personal level.

The relationship, which begins as a casual interlude between two young people with little in common--"eine Liebschaft, eine Bändelei, eine Woche, ein Verhältnis, einen Anfang, sie wußte das Wort nicht und nicht warum"[41]--intensifies commensurate to the political situation. Like their two countries, the closing of the border politicizes their relationship and the decisions they make. D. is desperate to leave the DDR as her choices become increasingly limited. But, as with Johnson's other characters, is not seeking a new reality, but only to flee from the old. When D. finally escapes over the border some months later, it is clear there is nothing left of their flimsy relationship once the physical barriers are removed. The only thing they have in common is their exploitation of each other. D. is motivated by the chance at a new life for herself in the West, B. by his need to assuage vague feelings of guilt and obligation.

Both B. and D. belong to the first post-war generation for whom the division of Germany is a fact of life. They represent the first "divided generation," immersed in opposing schools of political thought. However, D. comes off far better by comparison. In this novel, B. could just as easily stand for "boor." Like his love interest, B. is synonymous with the political and economic system from which he comes. He consciously cultivates an image of professional and financial success. Youth, money and a fast car all figure in the novel's opening sentence: "Der junge Herr B. konnte die Hand auf großes Geld legen und kaufte einen Sportwagen" (ZA, 7). The narrator later reveals that the car has been acquired with slick capitalist

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[41] Uwe Johnson, Zwei Ansichten (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1965)13. This work will be refered to subsequently in the text as "ZA."

ingenuity. When B. is called to photograph an accident for the newspaper, he buys the car on the spot from the owner, who is eager to part with his bad luck. The red status symbol not only wipes out five years of savings, but also requires him to overextend himself financially. However, he considers it is worthwhile, since "einen solchen Wagen würde es nur ein einziges Mal geben im Umkreis von zweihundert Kilometern" (ZA, 8). As a bonus, word spreads of his financial savvy, and he can charge more for his pictures. The car immediately becomes an extension of his weak self-image. Time and again he fantasizes how D. will react when he drives up in his flashy new foreign car. B. is devastated when the car is stolen within the month, and he is forced to rent a "klapprigen Kasten, den nicht einmal ein ostberliner Mädchen bewundern würde" (ZA, 17). After arranging for D.'s illegal border crossing into West Berlin, he is unable to meet her, as he is in Stuttgart picking up his new car.

Unfortunately, B. never overcomes his crippling superficiality. Entirely without family or friends, he dulls his feelings of loneliness and isolation with alcohol and a succession of girlfriends. His emotional life is limited to his car. His feelings for D. and concern for her livelihood never achieve the same emotional intensity. In Zwei Ansichten B. remains a pathetic caricature of West German bourgeoisie: shallow, self-involved, materialistic and somewhat stupid. While Johnson is consistently critical of the BRD in his novels, his concerns are not taken seriously by West German critics. Even the many pointed barbs found in Zwei Ansichten fail to hit their mark: "Somit is angedeutet, wie ein 'Dichter der beiden Deutschlands' sich damals zu benehmen hatte."[42]

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[42] D.G. Bond, German History and German Identity: Uwe Johnson's "Jahrestage" (Atlanta: Rodopi, 1993) 183.

There is never any question of the ultimate failure of the relationship between B. and D. Like Berlin itself they remain divided at the most basic level, and are unable to enter into any kind of meaningful relationship. the novel clearly illustrates Johnson's skepticism that there could be any sort of interaction or mediation between East and West. Although Johnson's view of the two political alternatives available in a divided Germany is negatively depicted in Johnson's early works, he advocates a continued dialogue between the two countries in preparation for an eventual political integration.

Three later works, Eine Reise Nach Klagenfurt (1974), Skizze eines Verunglückten (1981), and the fragment, Versuch einen Vater zu finden (1988), parallel some of the fundamental narrative and sociopolitical thematic elements of Jahrestage. They all have a unique relationship to the novel in that they were written during the ten-year break between the tetralogy's third and fourth volumes. Narrative techniques and structures, as well as thematic content, are typical of Johnson's fiction. Like Jahrestage, the two short works turn to the past--specifically the documented historical past--for illumination of a problematic individual existence.

Reise nach Klagenfurt, which for lack of a more precise description has been called a "Reisebericht," a "Nachruf," and a "Totenmesse," describes Johnson's visit to Bachmann's childhood home shortly after her tragic death in Rome. In this "biographische Arbeit" he uncovers vestiges of fascism in Klagenfurt which have been obscured by the passage of time, progress, and willful cultural amnesia. Through a collage of archival documents combined with his own personal observations and memories, Johnson recreates a city and a childhood destroyed by fascism. Events

which took place under the Nazi occupation had a profound effect on Bachmann both artistically and personally.

The posthumously published fragment, Versuch einen Vater zu finden, consists of the first 35 pages of Johnson's next project, Heute neunzig Jahr. It chronicles Heinrich Cresspahl's history as a young man and soldier in the Great War in years leading up to the events described in Jahrestage. The project--which Mecklenburg describes as "a mosaic of facts and signs, dates and sources, documents and oral evidence processed into hypotheses, episodes and images, and all with a strong degree of personal involvement"[43]--was left uncompleted at Johnson's death in 1984. The search for information is undertaken after Heinrich's death by his daughter, Gesine. Though Johnson's final intentions for the novel can only be guessed at, this preliminary fragment details another attempt by Gesine to contextualize her father's confusing, and often conflicting, actions long after his death. Here, as in Jahrestage, Johnson portrays an individual caught up by overwhelming historical circumstances. But in this case, it is a past to which she has no personal access. She must rely solely on historical documentation and personal conjecture to reconstruct the most plausible version of her father's history.

Gesine's past and sense of identity are intimately linked with that of her father in Jahrestage. Heinrich Cresspahl's life story, which also comprises a significant portion of the novel, is the story of modern Germany. When Gesine begins with her reconstruction of his story, he has been living abroad in the Netherlands and England for ten years. While on

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[43] Norbert Mecklenburg, "'Ein Junge aus dem *Dreikaiserjahr*': Uwe Johnson's 'Versuch, einen Vater zu finden,'" trans. Sarah Brickwood, Literature on the Threshold. The German Novel in the 1980s, eds. Arthur Williams, Stuart Parkes and Roland Smith (New York/ Oxford/ Munich: Berg, 1990) 36.

vacation in Mecklenburg in the summer of 1931, Cresspahl becomes enamored with Lisbeth Papenbrock, the youngest daughter of a wealthy Jerichow landowner and businessman. Despite an age difference of eighteen years and Lisbeth's engagement to another man, they marry and eventually settle in Jerichow. When an unbalanced Lisbeth commits suicide after witnessing anti-Semitic violence in her own town during the *Reichskristallnacht*, Heinrich is left to raise Gesine alone. During the war he simultaneously works for the German Luftwaffe at a local airfield while spying for the British. In 1945 assumes the thankless job as Jerichow's mayor; first under British occupation, then under the Russians. Some months later he is incarcerated, and spends two and a half years in a Russian prison. He is finally acquitted in May, 1948. Like his daughter, Heinrich is subjected to a series of sociopolitical realities beginning with German unification under Bismarck and ending with East German socialism. In contrast to Gesine, who is content to observe from the sidelines, he is an active participant in the political events of his time, driven by circumstances and the will to survive rather than ideology, .

In each of Johnson's works, documented history is both examined and challenged. Like most other writers of his generation, truth in both history and narration is a central issue for Johnson. The reality of a divided post-war Germany was that nothing could be taken at face value:

> Alienation from language and material was an especially difficult problem for post-war artists. The observation of the propaganda practices employed by the Nazis, the defeat of that system and the 'reeducation' of Germans by the victorious Allies clearly sensitized the generation to which Johnson belonged in a special way to the dangers of taking at face value official pronouncements of the truth.[44]

[44]van der Will 172.

Mecklenburg views this central theme as a series of overlapping processes: ". . . how is it possible to get from the crust to the core, from political history to the history of an individual, from the facts to the truth?"[45] Gesine finds that the impact of historical interpretation is immediate and personal as she turns to documentary materials in her attempt to reconstruct the past.

In Johnson's work, any compromise between the individual and sociopolitical reality--whether in the form of "ein dritter Weg," Dubcek's "socialism with a human face," or Gesine's illusory "moralische Schweiz, in die wir emigrieren können" (1, 382)-- remains out of reach. In his study, which reexamines the political dimension of Johnson's works, Kurt Fickert is overly optimistic in his characterization of Johnson's protagonists in their struggle against political circumstances:

> Jakob, Karsch, and perhaps B. have been sequestered in disillusionment, the primary state of mind resulting from the realization that they are powerless to change the course of human events, even to the extent that they might at least maintain their own integrity. . . . On the other hand, D., whom B. failed to appreciate, Karin, and the Gesine of the *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* all have the capacity to effect a compromise in the struggle between conscience and political reality; they learn that individuality can persevere against the forces of conformism by way of accommodating themselves to the existing situation, by making use of it, or by contending with it in a place where choice is still a viable factor.[46]

Regardless of the eventual outcome, the thematic thread which links all of Johnson's novels is the paradoxical co-existence of political reality and private life. Even those figures who seem to affect a balance between the

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[45]Mecklenburg, "'Ein Junge aus dem *Dreikaiserjahr*': Uwe Johnson's 'Versuch, einen Vater zu finden'" 35.

[46] Kurt Fickert, Neither Left nor Right. The Politics of Individualism in Uwe Johnson's Work (New York: Peter Lang, 1987) 98.

two are doomed ultimately to fail. Jakob Abs, Gesine Cresspahl, Karsch and the others are all in search of a nonpoliticized reality, an objective assessment of history, or both.

Gesine embodies this set of problems, which occupied Johnson throughout his writing career. In Jahrestage she becomes a point of convergence (*Zuordnungspunkt*). Unlike Mutmaßungen über Jakob, in which the narrative focuses essentially on a reconstruction of past events, the Jahrestage narrative examines the conflict between individual and sociopolitical reality in both an historical and in a contemporary context. The politically charged atmosphere of the late 1960s--resulting from the controversy generated by American intervention in Vietnam and the civil rights movement--exerts a profound influence on Gesine's life. Domestic problems such as violence, big-city crime, police brutality and racial tensions share the front page of The New York Times with international news of Cold War conflicts and the Prague Spring.

Contemporary events from The New York Times are all an integral part of Gesine's daily existence, whether directly or obliquely. Her perceptions of America are further shaped by her socialist upbringing, as well as her early exposure to fascism and war: ". . . jene frühe Erziehung in Sozialismus sitzt fest in ihr, sie hat ja auch das Schwimmen nicht verlernt und nur mit ausführlicher Beschreibung des Anfangs [der DDR] werde ich zeigen können, wie sie es, im Alter von 35 Jahren, doch noch einmal versuchen will mit dem Sozialismus."[47] This sense of political awareness is also evident in Gesine's detailed reconstruction of her childhood. Childhood memories--indelibly marked by facism and socialism--compete with contemporary events unfolding on Gesine's

[47] Uwe Johnson, "Brief an Siegfried Unseld" Johnsons "Jahrestage" 94.

internal stage. She views the task of confronting the past as a fundamental part of the search for identity and meaning: "Vielleicht war es die Lebensmitte, der Beginn der biologischen Rückbildung, die ihr das Bewusstsein des Lebenslaufes umkehrte in Richtung der Vergangenheit, in den Versuch zu finden, wie die jeweils vorvergangenen Zustände ihres Lebens noch durch etwas anderes verbunden waren als ihr Nacheinander."[48] Only by coming to terms with her history can she move beyond a passive acceptance of her surroundings and act decisively in determining her future.

When the novel ends abruptly at the end of one calendar year, the legitimacy of this entire process is radically undermined. On closer examination, however, the groundwork for this reversal is carefully laid throughout the fourth and final volume of Jahrestage. In the final volume Gesine's relationship to the present is markedly different. References from The New York Times, which form the structural and thematic framework of the novel, become less frequent as her focus shifts away from her immediate surroundings. This is reflected in her increased preoccupation with the past and the future represented by the Prague Spring. These two issues tend to overshadow the political and social concerns that dominate the first three volumes.

As in Johnson's earlier novels, Gesine also seems doomed to failure by the existing political reality. For his characters, options are limited. They must choose among resignation, destruction or flight. True to form, Jahrestage ends with Gesine's departure for Prague, which offers the hope of a liberalized form of socialism. The significance of her renewed commitment to socialism is negated as she is engulfed--and perhaps

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[48] Johnson, Begleitumstände 415.

consumed--by larger political events which lie outside the scope of the novel. The outcome is carefully anticipated in Johnson's portrayal of the political situation in the U.S. and the BRD during 1967/8. Unable to come to terms with either alternative, she commits herself to the third possibility offered by the Prague Spring. The steps leading to her ultimate break with the West are discernible in The New York Times items included in the text. However, when Gesine departs for Czechoslovakia on the eve of the Russian invasion at the close of Jahrestage it is clear that there is no escape or sanctuary from political reality.

CHAPTER 2
"FÜR WENN ICH TOT BIN": THE PARAMETERS OF GESINE'S NARRATIVE PROJECT

From the outset critics have hailed Johnson's Jahrestage a masterpiece of the post-war period. It has been described as a "Zeit-Mosaik"[1] and an "erzählte Chronik, die Privates politisch nimmt, die Gesellschaftskritik und Geschichtsschreibung in individueller Biographie aufgehen läßt,"[2] which "auch in unvollendeter Gestalt längst als eines der eigentümlichsten und bedeutendsten [Romane] der neueren deutschen Literatur galt."[3] Peter Demetz points to the novel as belonging to those works "die ihre Schicksale haben, und solche, die Mythen bilden, ehe wir sie noch ganz gelesen haben."[4] In his review of Jahrestage's final volume, Fritz Raddatz calls the completed novel "eines der unvergänglichen Denkmale der Zeit . . . unvergleichlich in seiner schwer entzifferbaren

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[1] Joachim Kaiser, "Für wenn wir tot sind," Johnsons "Jahrestage" 168.

[2] Rolf Becker, "Eine Bitte für die Stunde des Sterbens," Johnsons "Jahrestage" 187.

[3] Becker 187.

[4] Demetz 194.

Kompostition aus gläserner Klarheit und rätselhafter Dunkelheit."[5] Long before its completion Rolf Michaelis included Jahrestage in the prestigious *ZEIT-Bibliothek der 100 Bücher*.[6]

First and foremost, Jahrestage has been read as a novel which addresses recent German history, the implications of its Nazi legacy and the early years of the DDR. Its thematization of historical and political trends over a period of almost forty years is in the well-established tradition of both the political and the epochal novel (*Zeitroman*).[7] Rolf Becker's characterization of the work is typical of the almost exclusive focus on the Jerichow story in Johnson scholarship: "Seine 'Jahrestage' sind ein Buch von der Vertreibung und vom Heimweh, dieser 'schlimmen Tugend,' ein Buch von Verletzung, Verlust und Tod."[8] Roland Wiegenstein describes the far-ranging work as "gegen das Vergessen geschrieben."[9] The process of Gesine's reconstruction of memory clearly builds on the idea of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in its striving to explore and edify blank areas in Germany's historical and political consciousness. Like many post-war

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[5] Fritz J. Raddatz, "Ein Märchen aus Geschichte und Geschichten," Johnsons "Jahrestage" 177.

[6] Rolf Michaelis, "Uwe Johnson, Jahrestage," ZEIT-Bibliothek der 100 Bücher, ed. Fritz J. Raddatz (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1980).

[7] Kaiser, "Für wenn wir tot sind" 168.

[8] R. Becker 92.

[9] Roland H. Wiegenstein, "Johnson lesen. Vorschläge zu den 'Jahrestagen 1-4,'" Johnsons "Jahrestage" 205.

works, Jahrestage addresses the "Lücke im Bewußtsein."[10] For Gesine, National Socialism was neither an aberration nor a closed chapter. However, Johnson radically expands the movement's traditional historical parameters in his examination of recent German history.

Although the term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is used today to describe a wide range of literature over the last fifty years which addresses National Socialism, it more accurately describes the thematic focus of West German literature in the early post-war period. There was no comparable public discussion in the DDR, whose government categorically refused to acknowledge any ties to Nazi Germany. Early novels such as Hans Werner Richter's Die Geschlagenen (1949) and Sie fielen aus Gottes Hand (1951), Alfred Andersch's Die Kirschen der Freiheit (1952), and Wolfgang Koeppen's Der Tod in Rom (1954) all sought with some success to articulate the realities of Nazi Germany. Heinrich Böll, who became the most prominent writer of the immediate post-war period, established himself as "das kritische Gewissen des deutschen Volkes"[11] with novels such as Wo warst du, Adam? (1952), in which he took the Catholic church to task for its passivity in the face of Nazi brutality. The theme of coming to terms with the past was not just confined to prose. Max Frisch's drama, Nun singen sie wieder (1945), was one of the earliest portrayals of Nazi atrocity. Carl Zuckmayer's enormously successful play, Des Teufels General (1946), is probably the best known work of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in literature before 1959. The horrors of the Holocaust also became the subject of poetry

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[10] Kurt Batt, Revolte Intern. Betrachtungen zur Literatur der DDR (Leipzig: Verlag Philipp Reklam Jr., 1974) 104.

[11] Keith Bullivant, "Heinrich Böll--A Tribute," German Life and Letters 39 (1986): 245.

for German-Jewish writers Nelly Sachs (In den Wohnungen des Todes, 1946) and Paul Celan (Mohn und Gedächtnis, 1952).

Few German writers who experienced Nazi brutality survived to write about it. Ernst Wiechert's early survival narrative, Der Totenwald (1947), describes five months spent at Buchenwald in 1938. In 1955 novelist H.G. Adler published an account of the organization of everyday life in a Nazi "show camp," Theresienstadt 1941-45: Das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft. Such unvarnished first-hand accounts are rare, and are seldom written in German. For the most part, early post-war literature addresses the experiences of non-Jewish Germans far removed from the front and the camps. Of primary concern are the issues of complicity and guilt. However, stories of individual struggle common in post-war literature are at odds with collective behavior. Portrayals of suffering and pathos on the part of individuals swept along by historical events did little to explain Nazi successes on a national scale. This literature mirrors a society which displays only limited comprehension of individual moral responsibility in the *Endlösung*. Consistently individuals were portrayed as at odds with anonymous, monolithic institutions (i.e. the military, the camp, the government). Early examples include little or no discussion of the broader political and social issues which first enabled Hitler's rise to power and later led to widespread cooperation with his policies. There was also little sense of continuity between the years leading up to and following 1945. While many of the early literary attempts at *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* confronted the reading public with extremely uncomfortable issues of the recent past, these works did not expressly address the cumulative consequences of individual actions or passivity, examine the

wider socio-historical context of Fascism or question too closely West Germany's post-war path.

The close of the 1950s marks a turning point in literary perceptions of the past, as demonstrated by the two definitive, but vastly different examples of literature dealing with Germany's Nazi past, Heinrich Böll's Billiard um halbzehn and Günter Grass' Die Blechtrommel. These two novels are decidedly different from earlier works focusing on isolated individuals and events:

> Ob Böll, Grass, Lenz oder Johnson, sie all thematisieren . . . und zwar gegen den Strich politologischer Theoriebildung, durch deren Strukturgitter das sich als moralische Persönlichkeit dünkende Individuum zumeist durchfällt, die Verstrickung des einzelnen in dem undurchdringlichen Gestrüpp politischer Interessen und Machtpositionen. Sie alle versuchen literarische Lösungen für die sich aus solchen Verstrickungen ergebenden Gewissensprobleme zu entwickeln, die die Integrität des einzelnen und letztlich auch seine personale Identität bedrohen.[12]

In fictional guise both Böll and Grass look to Germany's prewar years as a prelude to the Third Reich. In both novels the popular cultural myth of a *Stunde Null*, or a complete break with the past, is shown to be a pathetic farce.

The introduction of this theme initiated two important developments in literature addressing *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. The phenomenon of National Socialism is discussed in a considerably wider historical and social context than was previously the case. Even more important is the realization that, in the aftermath of two world wars in which Germany was the aggressor, certain social and cultural traits had contributed to the

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[12] Beckes 64.

public's susceptibility to authoritarian thinking and behavior. These are factors which still play a significant role in contemporary German society, as well as in literature:

> Es sind mir wichtige Namen genannt worden: Eich und Huchel, Koeppen und Kästner. Ich weiß nicht, was die Genannten bestimmt hat, so zu überleben. Ich kann ihr Verhalten während der Nazizeit (weiterdichten und publizieren) nicht wägen, doch nehme ich an, daß jeder für sich . . . sein Verhalten am Schicksal jener Schriftsteller gemessen hat, die Deutschland verlassen mußten, die in den Selbstmord getrieben wurden, die man erschlagen hat. Oder sie haben sich später an Autoren messen müssen, die gleichfalls geblieben waren und überlebten, doch ohne das von den Nazis schlau eingeräumte Gehege zu nutzen.[13]

The documentary literature which emerged in the early Sixties honed in on the role played by ordinary citizens who, for reasons of their own, actively participated in or passively condoned the actions of the Nazi government. Proceedings and testimony from war crimes trials became tools with which to examine the role played by individuals in context of larger events. Unlike many earlier literary works addressing *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, in which crimes against Jews were invariably committed by madmen, they become nightmares of conformity in documentary literature. In her first-hand account of one of the most sensational war crimes trials, Eichmann in Jerusalem (1963), Hannah Arendt portrays Adolf Eichmann, the orchestrater of Hitler's *Endlösung*, as a man who is both deceptively normal and horrifically flawed. He is an embodiment of dangerous extremes. He displays an abject conformity to authority, a complete subjugation of moral considerations to the attainment of political goals, and an ordinariness so profound as to be evil. She sees in

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[13] Günter Grass, Kopfgeburten oder Die Deutschen sterben aus (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1980) 23.

him "die Banalität des Bösen" characteristic of the "millions of ordinary men who differed from Eichmann only in being differently employed."[14] Dramatic interpretations of the Nuremburg and the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials, as well as of Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem all emphasize this same theme.

Some significant documentary dramas from the mid-Sixties are based on materials generated by war crimes trials: Die Ermittlung (1965) by Peter Weiss, Joel Brand. Die Geschichte eines Geschäfts (1965) by Heinar Kipphardt, and prozeß in nürnberg (1967) by DDR dramatist Rolf Schneider. Though they are based on actual documentary materials these works are not without their problems. The selected materials fit to some extent the playwright's predetermined agenda. However, the dramatization of trial proceedings neatly circumvents several major obstacles in writing about the Holocaust. Events are related in hind-sight rather than reenacted. Crimes and atrocities are recounted by both victims and perpetrators in a controlled, factually scripted situation. The courtroom itself creates a well-known visual parameter in which incomprehensible events are explored. The script utilizes the same historical language that played such a crucial role in the Nazi's success. Lastly, there is the structure of the trial itself whose sole purpose is to determine responsibility for crimes committed. The trial process itself sets distinct criteria for the types of evidenciary material permitted. The building of the case creates forward momentum in a drama where the verdict is a foregone conclusion.

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[14] Michael Hamburger, After the Second Flood: Essays on the Postwar German Era (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986) 37.

These dramas are significant in that they "broke through the comfortable myth of National Socialism having been the work of a small group of madmen, to ask telling and highly differentiated questions about personal guilt and also about the involvement of German business in National Socialism."[15] The trial dramas all focus on the ability of ordinary German citizens to carry out atrocities, and the inability of many to comprehend how the sum total of their individual actions culminates in the unthinkable. As in earlier works of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, these dramatists are again quick to shift a large portion of responsibility to anonymous, monolithic forces. The significant difference is that these contributors to the Holocaust are largely external. Capitalism and the Allies are both popular targets. Rolf Hochhuth chastises the Catholic Church for its politically expedient passivity during World War II in his 1962 drama Der Stellvertreter. Despite overwhelming documentary evidence, the problem of individual responsibility remains unresolved both in the courtroom and in literature.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s the literary focus turned from the broad historical stage to the intimate sphere of family life. Unlike works from the immediate post-war era, a younger generation of authors undertook essentially factual explorations of the roles played by family members and neighbors during the Third Reich. Often childhood perceptions were irreconcilable with both accepted collective history and existing archival evidence. Several novels from the 1970s view Nazi atrocities from a very immediate, personal context and often incorporate authentic documentary materials. Using strategies developed in

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[15] Keith Bullivant, "The Spectre of the Third Reich. The West German Novel of the 1970s and National Socialism," After the 'Death of Literature.' West German Writing of the 1970s, ed. Keith Bullivant (New York: Berg, 1989) 141.

documentary dramas, several writers associated with the *Studentenbewegung* turned to the materials locked away in local *Giftschränke* to deconstruct "official" versions of events. Younger writers, too young to have actively participated in Nazi society yet indelibly marked by fascism, confronted perpetrators and *Mitläufer* within their own immediate social circles. Unlike the documentary playwrights, however, they tend to be critical of historical documents and the circumstances under which they were created. This generation was exposed early to Nazi propaganda, censorship and Allied reeducation efforts. They were suspicious of the unreflected transformation from fascism to democratic capitalism. The result was an inherent mistrust of language and institutions of authority which characterize the *Väterromane* and documentary novels of the Seventies and early Eighties. They all explore the discrepancies between fabricated and factual versions of events during the Third Reich perpetrated within the family and what effect this had on their upbringing and family dynamics.[16] Some better known examples include Peter Härtling's Nachgetragene Liebe (1980), Christoph Meckel's Suchbild (1980), Günter Seuren's Abschied von einem Mörder (1980). In these *Väterromane* the writers assume the mantle of judge and jury in evaluating the actions of family and neighbors.

Manfred Franke's documentary novel, Mordverläufe (1973), is typical of this period. As an adult he sets out to uncover what really happened in his small Rhineland town during the *Reichskristallnacht*. The novel's subtitle ("9./10.XI.1938 Ein Protokoll von der Angst, von Mißhandlung und Tod, vom Auffinden der Spuren und deren Wiederentdeckung") initially

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[16] Keith Bullivant, Realism Today. Aspects of the Contemporary West German Novel (Leamington Spa, Hamburg, New York: Berg, 1987) 158.

attests to the addition of a new goal for *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, that of historical rehabilitation. But despite a thorough evaluation of available materials this goal proves unattainable. It quickly becomes apparent that ostensibly factual sources such as police reports, trial proceedings, depositions, interviews, newspaper articles are all tainted. In retrospect Franke discovers that it is impossible to differentiate between actual events and the public fabrication, or quite literally to separate fact from fiction.

From Franke's perspective the fictionalization process of the *Reichskristallnacht* assumes greater significance than his initial objective of establishing what actually happened that night. The corruption of documentary material to substantiate a public version of events demonstrates how, despite the outward repudiation of violence, a society can systematically rationalize murder and persecution. By the end of the war the fiction was a psychological necessity. It was impossible to reconcile the reality of the Holocaust with the faces of friends and neighbors. In the post-war investigation by the Allies the townspeople were given an opportunity to rectify errors in public mythology, but again fail to punish those responsible for murder. The failure to administer justice, despite radically changed political circumstances, becomes an indictment of not just one small town, but of an entire society.

For Franke, the actual events of the local *Reichskristallnacht* are far less damning than the townspeople's inability to act or to later take responsibility for the horrific cumulative results of their passivity. In the end, the evidence as it exists and the story behind its corruption bears out his initial supposition: "Auch Nichthandeln ist Handeln."[17] Both violence

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[17] Manfred Franke, Mordverläufe. 9./10.XI.1938 Ein Protokoll von der Angst, von Mißhandlung und Tod, vom Auffinden der Spuren und deren Wiederentdeckung (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1973) 27.

and passivity played decisive roles in the systematic persecution of Jews and other undesirables. In Mordverläufe, as in other works of documentary literature, Franke demonstrates with ample evidence how victims of Nazi persecution were hurried along the route to the concentration camps by innumerable individual instances of action or even passivity.

There are two features which distinguish Jahrestage from many other novels of the genre. Rather than beginning with her own birth, which neatly coincides with Hitler's assumption of power, Gesine's historical reconstruction chronicles both the prelude and the aftermath to National Socialism. Within the context of her story Johnson cites historical evidence to demonstrate his premise that Hitler's Third Reich was neither an insular historical epoch nor the culmination of a tragic historical chain of events. There are numerous political, social and economic ties which link it firmly to the failed Weimar Republic and the American Vietnam War era. The New York narrative becomes the crucial component in his argument. By placing the historical reconstruction in a contemporary and, most importantly, non-German context Johnson accomplishes several objectives. Because of the complex interrelationship between the Jerichow and New York stories, National Socialism is effectively chained to an historical continuum leading directly to the present.

Although Gesine is separated from Germany's Nazi legacy by an ocean and almost a quarter century, reminders of her childhood experiences are everywhere. She regularly comes across related items in The New York Times. Her interest in modern Germany as reflected in the text are limited: war crimes trials, developments between East and West, the Neo-Faschist movement and former Nazis still active in the West

German government. The Cresspahl's Upper Manhattan neighborhood is home to many dislocated Jews. In addition to Mrs. Ferwalter, a concentration camp survivor who ironically suppresses any sense of anger or outrage against the Germans in her desire to preserve a precarious historical mythology, Gesine has other acquaintances who are victims of the Third Reich. She describes sociology professor Dmitri Weiszand as an "Absolvent mehrerer Lager in Osteuropa (I, 145). Her tutor for Czech, Anatol Kreslil, lost his wife to starvation while they were in hiding from the Nazis. She also finds National Socialism a facet of her own identity. In the eyes of others it is often impossible to separate her from her homeland's Fascist past. It is a distinction that Gesine herself is often incapable of making. In the New York story her surroundings and the paper are a constant reminder of the links of history.

At the bank, among friends, as well as within the context of her own historical reconstruction, Gesine cannot escape the label of "die Deutsche." Whether the subject is politics or history Gesine is expected to justify her country, and by extension, herself:

> Erklären Sie uns das. Es sind doch Ihre Landsleute, Mrs. Cresspahl. Versuchen Sie uns, dies zu erklären. (II, 794)

While any explanation is doomed to failure from the outset, it must nevertheless be attempted. The novel is in effect an attempt to fulfill the request.

With a few exceptions, such as Christa Wolf's Kindheitsmuster, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* remained primarily a West German concept: "The increased emphasis in the Federal Republic on *Bewältigung* of the Nazi past, particularly by means of a self-exploratory, self-revelatory

psychological process, converged with--and possibly helped create--literary tendencies toward split perspectives and the unveiling of the author within the text. . . ."[18] Like Johnson, Wolf also considers strenuous engagement with the past an unending, if unavoidable, process: "Für diejenigen, die in der Zeit des Faschismus aufwuchsen, kann es kein Datum geben, von dem ab sie ihn als 'bewältigt' erklären können."[19] It is not only an undertaking for Germans, but for other societies.

In Jahrestage Johnson removes the discussion of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* from a strictly West German context, and with it any pretenses of progress in that area: "Ich kann mich weder von der deutschen Vergangenheit noch von der deutschen Gegenwart dispensieren."[20] Gesine systematically chips away at her armor of socialized consciousness in an American venue against a background of international events. Her New York City surroundings places Gesine's reevaluation of the past in an entirely new context: "So zieht sie dem Abstand von 6000 Kilometer Geschichte ein, so macht sie uns den hiesigen Aufenthalt angenehm" (I, 173). The distance enables "eine die nationalen Grenze hinter sich lassende Blickweise."[21] Her efforts are also in part a concerted effort to address her daughter's curiosity about her family and homeland. Marie's separation from her German roots is more than

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[18] Sandra Frieden, "'In eigener Sache": Christa Wolf's 'Kindheitsmuster,'" German Quarterly 54 (1981): 473.

[19] Hans Kaufmann, "Gespräch mit Christa Wolf," Weimarer Beiträge 20 (1974): 98.

[20] As quoted by Theo Buck in his article, "Anstände mit der Wahrheit," Text + Kritik 65/66 (1980): 20.

[21] Buck 21.

geographical. She represents a generation whose knowledge of the Second World War is entirely second hand, but is aware that issues from the past continue to impact the Cresspahl family's daily existence. Thus, Johnson's Jerichow story transcends both political divisions and generation gaps.

What distinguishes Jahrestage from other earlier works addressing National Socialism is that Gesine's reexamination of the past results in the undermining of the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* process itself:

> Es ist notwendig, das festzustellen um desto unbefangener und vorbehaltloser über das sprechen zu können, was auch an diesem Buch--wie an den vorangegangenen--kostbar und unvergleichlich ist. Dazu gehört in erster Linie Gesines heimlicher Zweifel an der Tauglichkeit ihrer Vergangenheitsarbeit. Gesine versenkt sich ja nicht proustisch ins Gewesene, um aus seiner Vereinigung mit dem Gegenwärtigen etwas Allgemeines, ein Gesetz, eine "ewige" Wahrheit zu gewinnen. Was sie will, ist vielmehr eine praktische Lektion für ihre Tochter.[22]

She does not seek reconcile past and present in order to come to terms with contemporary Germany. She in fact rejects the BRD as a viable political alternative because it pretends to have adequately addressed the past despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. The discussion surrounding the statue of limitations for war crimes is the first West German current event mentioned in Jahrestage: "Die westdeutche Regierung will die Verjährung für Morde und Massenausrottung in der Nazizeit ganz und gar aufheben, vielleicht" (I, 21).[23] The overwhelming majority of BRD items reported in The New York Times are in some way

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[22] Blöcker, "Prager Traum--New Yorker Wirklichkeit" 165.

[23] The significance of this particular news item in Jahrestage is often misconstrued in secondary literature. See Ch.6 for further discussion.

connected to the Third Reich. There are, of course, a number of articles appearing during 1967/8 which deal with completely different issues, although they do not usually make the front page, unlike the more sensational reports from the courtroom. In any case, Gesine does not generally make note of them in the narrative. This topic's prevalence in The New York Times, and subsequently in Jahrestage, suggests at least from a U.S. perspective that Germany's identity remains inseparable from National Socialism for the foreseeable future:

> . . . nur soll die jeweils erzählte Vergangenheit uns unsere gegenwärtigen Verhältnisse erklären. Wir können die Nachrichten von unseren Vorgängern gebrauchen, wenn sie auch Nachrichten für und über uns sind.[24]

The central role played by Marie in Gesine's exploration of the past is also a strong argument that, unlike in the legal system, there should be no question of statute of limitations on the past. As Christa Wolf suggests, it is an ongoing process with no foreseeable conclusion.

In Johnson's Jahrestage and Wolf's Kindheitsmuster the questioning of public and private history is intimately linked to the determination of individual identity. Gesine and Nelly, her counterpart in Kindheitsmuster, both set out to recover an authentic version of childhood under the Nazis as a response to a post-war society based on historical fabrication and alienation: "Niemals haben Menschen so vieles vergessen sollen, um funktionsfähig zu bleiben, wie die, mit denen wir leben."[25] Wolf's historical reconstruction also acknowledges the immediacy of Germany's recent past in contemporary life:

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[24] Uwe Johnson, "Vorschläge zur Prüfung eines Romans" 31-2.

[25] Christa Wolf, Kindheitsmuster (Darmstadt/ Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1987) 451.

> . . . [es] ist nicht tot; es ist nicht einmal vergangen. Wir trennen es von uns ab und stellen uns fremd.[26]

For the protagonists of both novels the exploration of childhood becomes a means by which they can reclaim their sense of self and purpose. Repression used as a survival mechanism sets a dangerous precedent. Their individual projects gain particular significance as their young daughters become politically cognizant. Wolf uses news events in alluding to recurrent patterns of socialization and the sometimes destructive results on a world-wide scale. Ongoing conflict in Southeast Asia, Chile and the Middle East, along with an increasingly chilly Cold War all have their historical counterparts. The implications of these patterns are personal as well as global. Likewise, Gesine can find ample evidence for the failure of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in the news from West Germany:

> Immer noch haben sie in Westdeutschland einen Greis zum Staatspräsidenten, der im Jahre 1944 Baupläne für Konzentrationslager unterzeichnet haben soll. Er glaubt nicht, daß er es tat; einen Eid könnte er nicht darauf ablegen. Ein amerikanischer Schriftensachverständiger hat die Signatur auf den Plänen als die des Staatspräsidenten erkannt. Ein bonner Student, der neben dem Namen des Staatspräsidenten in einer Ehrenrolle die Berufsbezeichnung "K.Z.-Baumeister" eintrug, wurde von der Universität gewiesen. Die Christlich-Demokratische Union, der die Sozialdemokraten beim Regieren helfen, antwortet auf Forderungen nach dem Rücktritt des Belasteten: Wer das verlange, wolle nur die Koalition unter Druck setzen und die Weichen für die Wahl einer anderen stellen; das ist der Stellenwert von Konzentrationslagern in der westdeutschen Politik; ein solches Land ist das, und Mrs. Ferwalter sagt: Sicherlich mußte jeder das damals tun, gewiß hatte er eine Ehefrau. (II, 788-9)

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[26] Wolf 9.

The furor over Bundespräsident Heinrich Lübke's complicity in the construction of Nazi concentration camps lasts several weeks. Gesine has little to say about his participation in the *Endlösung* or the current scandal. She lets his political maneuverings speak for themselves. The focus of the newspaper items in the text is clearly on how clear-cut evidence of Lübcke's collaboration is received by the press, the public and politicians. His evasive replies to the charges, along with his party's reaction to the scandal, illustrate clearly the government's failure to confront latent elements of National Socialism from within. The backlash against those who brought Lübcke's collaboration to light is particularly vicious. The student who brings the documents to the public's attention is expelled from the university. The CDU decries the accusations against Lübcke as blatant political mudslinging. That the signature on the blueprints--material evidence authenticated by an American handwriting expert--exists at all is of seemingly secondary importance. The need to rationalize proves overwhelming on both a political and a personal level, as illustrated by Mrs. Ferwalter. The content of the debate is a clear indicator of the current West German political climate.

In their examinations of childhood under fascism, Johnson and Wolf both address the layers of socialized consciousness which makes it possible to sustain this sort of public self-deception over time. In Kindheitsmuster, the reconstruction process centers around the question: "Wie sind wir so geworden, wie wir heute sind?" Wolf's approach to the past is a self-exploratory analysis of psychological process which probes a childhood that is "vergessen, verdrängt, verleugnet."[27] The tenacity of the survival mechanism proves a stumbling block for Wolf's autobiographical persona

[27] Wolf 12.

in the novel. For her the key to the past--and ultimately to freedom from its repetitive patterns--is an understanding of the subjective process. Wolf points unequivocally to "dieser fatale Hang der Geschichte zu Wiederholungen, gegen den man sich wappnen muß."[28] Similarly, Johnson's protagonist struggles to obtain some measure of objectivity. His emphasis is on the process of analysis and change. The exploration of Gesine's awareness (*Bewußtsein*) and perception only lays the groundwork for the writer's true purpose. In an interview with Manfred Durzak, Johnson articulates the crucial second step which is his principal objective. It is the moment when the reader recognizes:

> Ja, so wie es da geschrieben steht, so ist es, so leben wir.
> Aber wollen wir so leben?"[29]

For Gesine, an understanding of how individual actions (i.e. those of family and neighbors) contributed to past events is a necessary prerequisite to responsible action in the present. Wolf believes recognition of such patterns is the beginning of their exorcism. Conversely, Johnson finds that there is no escape from the patterns of the past.

The news from West Germany indicates that elements of National Socialism are deep entrenched in the highest echelons of nation politics. The uproar over the discovery of Bundespräsident Heinrich Lübcke's signature on concentration camp blueprints is only one example. Bundeskanzler--and former Nazi party member--Kurt Georg Kiesinger shows blatant disregard for the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* concept when

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[28] Wolf 159.

[29] Manfred Durzak, "Dieser langsame Weg zu einer größeren Genauigkeit. Gespräch mit Uwe Johnson," Gespräche über den Roman. Formbestimmungen und Analysen, ed. Manfred Durzak (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1976) 431. See also Johnson's essay on the novel, "Vorschläge zur Prüfung eines Romans."

he appoints another "ehemaligen Angehöriger und Beamter der Nazis" to the post of party speaker (I, 253), who remains unnamed in the text itself. Gesine is so incensed by the successful political rehabilitation of Franz Josef Strauß that she lists it among her reasons for leaving the BRD. The man, whom she refuses to name in the text, served as "'Offizier für wehrgeistige Führung' . . . Voraussetzung: aktiver Nationalsozialist" and afterwards "gab er sich aus als Widerstandskämpfer." His subsequent slick political maneuverings--upon which Gesine elaborates over the next three pages--have brought him within reach of what he truly desires: "Der Mann möchte Kanzler von Westdeutschland werden und Atomwaffen unter den Druckknopf bekommen" (IV, 1874). Strauß embodies the egotism and moral bankruptcy rampant in West German politics. A return to the BRD under such circumstances is impossible: "Hätt ich je Heimweh nach der westdeutschen Politik, ein Bild hängt ich mir auf von dem" (IV, 1874). West German political reality belies any pretense of progress in confronting the recent past.

Gesine, like other Johnson characters, is locked into the identity determined by her sociopolitical environment:

> . . . ich gebe dir recht, immer von neuem verwechselt er die Person mit der staatlichen Herkunft. Für ihn bin ich Deutschland, das vorige und die beiden jetzigen, für ihn habe ich manchmal kein Gesicht am Kopf, sondern nationales Pigment, ihm bin ich verantwortlich für die westdeutsche Bundesbahn und für die westdeutschen Nazis. (I, 145)

The societies in which she participated have all left their mark. As an individual she is powerless to bring about significant change. Even if she could manage to transcend the pasts' internalized patterns, she would be unable to change the attitudes of those around her.

Johnson's Jahrestage simultaneously explores and criticizes the concept of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. However, the novel's closing image reinforces the links of history: "Wir hielten einander an den Händen: ein Kind; ein Mann unterwegs an den Ort wo die Toten sind; und sie, das Kind das ich war" (IV, 1891). This same interrelationship of past and present, particularly in the confrontation of German fascism, is echoed in Christa Wolf's Kindheitsmuster, where "der heutige Tag ist schon der letzte Tag der Vergangenheit."[30]

Through the figure of Gesine Johnson articulates the concerns of an entire generation seeking to define their identity as citizens of post-war Germany:

> Das ist einer Person vom Jahre 1933, die im Jahre 67/68 nicht mehr in Deutschland sitzt, wo sie geboren ist, sondern in New York, und die in den eigentümlichen Zustand geraten ist, der manche Leute um die 30 ankommt. Das ist der Zustand, in dem man sich unverhofft, ohne daß man es vorher geahnt hat, fragt: "Woher komme ich eigentlich, was sind meine Eltern gewesen, was ist das für ein Land, in dem ich aufgewachsen bin, wie kamen meine Eltern dazu, daß ich 1933 geboren wurde in dem Zustand Deutschlands, der damals war?" Das fragt sich diese Person. Sie ist sicherlich nicht die einzige, die sich das fragt, und sie versucht nun durch Erinnerungsversuche, durch Rekonstruktionsversuche, sich selber zu finden.[31]

Clearly, Jahrestage is a novel about history and the historical process, although Gesine's historical reconstruction takes place in a distinctly non-German context. Up to this point, however, this one-sided view of the novel has all but eclipsed the role of New York City as Jerichow's temporal, thematic and structural opposite. Her new vantage point, and eventual

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[30] Wolf 9.

[31] Schmid 255.

rejection of both German political alternatives, projects these issues on the American stage. There has been little discussion about the novel as a historical chronicle of America in the late 1960s, which over the last thirty years has achieved its own historicity.

The significance of New York and the issues facing the U.S. during 1967/8 in Johnson's Jahrestage were of only secondary interest to critics until the early 1980s. Most subscribed to Christian Gebert's position that Johnson, like Columbus who embarked for India only to discover America, "nämlich, etwas gescheiter durch die modernen Verkehrsverhältnisse, kam nach Amerika und entdeckte Mecklenburg."[32] Only with the publication of the long-awaited fourth and final volume of Jahrestage in 1983 did the examination of Johnson's *Amerikabild* gain momentum. It was also not by chance that this new direction in Johnson criticism coincided with a trend among American Germanists to emphasize American-German interrelationships in literature and other areas. The early 1980s saw a spate of publications addressing the U.S image in literature. As a result well-known works by a range of writers from Goethe, Heinrich Heine and many 20th century writers were reexamined in a new context. Post-war works in particular were at the forefront of the discussion.

Beginning in the 1950s the U.S. is used by several post-war writers as a vast background against which the protagonist evolves--or unravels. In many cases the events are loosely autobiographical. America plays a prominent role in several of Max Frisch's novels, as well as in his Tagebuch 1966-1971. In their far-reaching quests for identity, the protagonists of Homo faber (1957) , Stiller (1954), Mein Name sei Gantenbein

[32] Christian Gebert, "United States of Mecklenburg," Johnsons "Jahrestage" 147.

(1964) and Montauk (1975) all traverse large tracts of the country. In contrast to Johnson, Frisch's depictions of the U.S. fall more or less in the category of *Reiseprosa*. Typically, America takes shape in his novels as a composite of highways, cities and airports. The scenery is secondary to the character's futile search for meaning. Another example is Wolfgang Koeppen's travelogue, Amerikafahrt (1959).[33]

In general, Durzak characterizes this portrayal of America in German literature before the mid-Sixties as stilted and clichéed:

> Ein Amerika-Image, das kaum mehr in erster Linie von der Literatur propagiert wurde, sondern an dem die Literatur gleichsam nur partizipierte, wie von allem zahlreiche--bereits analysierte--Reiseberichte belegen. Die Massenmedien, politische und kulturelle Journalistik, haben in erster Linie dieses neue Amerika-Image kreiert, das weitgehend affirmative Geltung hatte und das publizistische Feigenblatt für eine politische Machtposition abgab, mit der man sich häufig identifizierte.[34]

The image of the U.S. as a patriarchal democratic superpower suffered as the Cold War progressed. A younger generation of German writers began to question long-entrenched East-West political positions, and the severe repercussions the conflict had for Germany in particular. Durzak also points to American intervention in Vietnam as the point where "der große Bruder, der sich zum Hüter der westlichen Freiheit in der Welt aufgeschwungen hatte, an rapider moralischer Auszehrung zu erkranken [begann]."[35] Reinhard Lettau's scathingly critical Täglicher Faschismus.

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[33] For a more in-depth discussion of the *Amerikabild* in German literature refer to Manfred Durzak's study, Das Amerika-Bild in der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur. Historische Voraussetzungen und aktuelle Beispiele (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1979).

[34] Durzak, "Abrechnung mit einer Utopie?" 176.

[35] Durzak, "Abrechnung mit einer Utopie?" 177.

Amerikanische Evidenz aus 6 Monaten (1971), which describes a nation saturated with fascism and violence, is indicative of a new image of America. Similarly, Jürg Federspiel's dark portrait of New York City, Museum des Hasses. Tage in Manhattan (1969), describes a cold, inhuman society self-destructing from within.

By contrast, in a tamer version of the loosely structured "road novel" inspired by Beat writer Jack Kerouac's On the Road (1957) Peter Handke uses the U.S. as a completely apolitical backdrop for a warring couple in Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied (1972). Several works of varying quality were the result of writer-in-residence visits such as Martin Walser's campus novel, Brandung (1985), Gunter Kunert's Der andere Planet. Ansichten von Amerika (1974), along with such later works as Dieter Wellershoff's Florida *Reisebericht*, Im Lande des Alligators (1992).

The Jahrestage narrative can be broken down into three basic threads, which are nominally linked by the collaborative project between Gesine and her narrative partner. On one level, the novel recounts Gesine's experiences "as a citizen and a taxpayer of New York."[36] The reconstructive narrative depicting Gesine's recollections of childhood and early adulthood in the small Mecklenburg town of Jerichow constitutes a second level. A third narrative strand expressed in italics, consists almost entirely of real and imagined exchanges. Often these are between Gesine and long-dead figures from her past. Each narrative strand is characterized by a distinct style, viewpoint, and historical time. These three separate narrative strands intersect in Gesine, who is the focal point

[36] A. Leslie Wilson, "'An unacknowledged humorist': An Interview with Uwe Johnson. Sheerness-in-Kent, 20 April 1982," Dimension. Contemporary German Arts and Letters 15 (1982): 412.

and primary narrator of this novel encompassing The City, The Sixties, and Germany's recent past.

The three strands function independently in the narrative, but share a degree of thematic interdependence. Transitions between them results in an implied thematic counterpoint. Gesine's past and present experiences coexist with a larger sociopolitical reality in which she is a minute, but relevant, participant. Peter Beckes describes the relationship between the two as an "enge Verzahnung zwischen Privatsphäre und öffentlichen Belangen, zwischen der 'Banalität' des Alltags und den großen politischen Staatsaktionen in beiden Wirklichkeiten."[37] The proximity of items from different narrative threads in the text imply associations between past and present events, rather than through any overt intervention by the narrator. However, in a novel which many critics consider as being one about recent German history, the coexistence of the Jerichow and New York narrative strands has long been a source of pointed criticism:

> Schon dieser kokette Provinzialismus, modisch konfrontiert den New Yorker Kulissen (alles natürlich mit Akribie beobachtet, oh!, da stimmt jedes Detail): Mal Dialekt aus Mecklenburg, gleich darauf die headlines der "New York Times," damit niemand sagen könne, man sei unaktuell, die unerträgliche Preziosität, die aus US-Negern "Bürger afrikanischer Abstammung," aus Landstreichern "Stadtstreicher" und aus den in Vietnam Gefallenen "beruflich am Krieg Gestorbene" macht. . . . Und dann die vielen falschen, überanstrengten Vergleiche.[38]

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[37] Beckes 65.

[38] Peter Hamm, "Uwe Johnson, der Schwierige," Johnsons "Jahrestage" 154.

Gebert is not alone in considering these passages "von geringem Interesse."[39] Consistently, critics' objections to Johnson's obsessive attention to detail is limited to the contemporary narrative strand, especially the inclusion of contemporary events from The New York Times. For many, the coexistence of the two narrative strands implies a problematic comparison between Nazi Germany and the U.S. in the late Sixties, an assumption which Johnson vehemently denies.

In her study Uwe Johnsons "Jahrestage": Die Gegenwart als variierende Wiederholung der Vergangenheit, Roberta Hye argues--not entirely without success in some cases--for the direct correlation between past and present events through the continual recurrence of evil.[40] Her argument for Johnson's portrayal of human history as an endless, violent cycle is based on a perceived pattern of correlation between newspaper items and historical events. She further contends that Johnson uses these parallel events to suggest similarities between America in the late 1960s and Nazi Germany:

> Das Gleiche wiederholt sich nach Johnsons Vorstellungen nicht. Wohl aber kehrt Ähnliches wieder zum Beispiel, obwohl der Zweite Weltkrieg einmalig ist, kommen Kriege in der Geschichte immer wieder vor und mit ihnen verwandte Erscheinungen. In Jahrestage sind die Variationen in der Wiederholung durch die spezifischen Daten--1938 und 1968--durch die Personen--die Vergangenheitsgeschichte gehört Heinrich Cresspahl und die Gegenwartsgeschichte seiner Tochter Gesine--und schließlich durch die Schauplätze des Romans--Jerichow

[39] Gebert 149.

[40] "Uwe Johnson zieht zwar Parallelen zwischen dem Deutschland der dreißiger Jahre und dem Amerika von 1968. Aber er bleibt . . . nicht bei der Parallelität der zwei Perioden stehen, sondern geht darüber hinaus und stellt mit seinem Werk eine Geschichtserfahrung dar: Die Gegenwart erscheint als variierende Weiderholung der Vergangenheit." Roberta Hye, Uwe Johnsons "Jahrestage": Die Gegenwart als variierende Wiederholung der Vergangenheit (Frankfurt a.M./ New York: Peter Lang, 1978)10.

> und die Stadt New York--gegeben. Aber obwohl die Daten, Namen und Orte verschieden sind, bleiben das Bild der Welt und das Bild des Menschen in beiden im Roman geschilderten Epochen sich gleich. Der Mensch ändert sich nicht; das besagt, er ist genauso böse in Amerika 1968 wie er 1938 Deutschland war.[41]

Hye's supposition, however, goes too far in establishing correlations between the two narrative threads, especially in her insistence on the interchangeability of historical epochs. She claims that the similarity between the Gestapo and the CIA "ist nicht zu unterschätzen." In her estimation there is also little appreciable difference between the CIA practices and the methods employed by the East German government.[42] She views the "Fangeliste" hung at every post office with the rumored "komputerisierten Karteien des CIAs für jeden Bürger afrikanischer Abstammung."[43] In this case, Hye fails to distinguish between fact and fiction, contrary to Johnson's own position cited in the text. The supposed CIA files on African-Americans are part of a larger conspiracy theory in which this information will be used to incarcerate them in camps to preclude a racial civil war. This scenario--among others which are equally questionable--is part of the small talk at a cocktail party given by Gräfin Seydlitz.[44] The speaker, Anselm Kristlein,[45] makes a number of

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[41] Hye 11.

[42] Hye 55.

[43] Hye 55-6.

[44] The character is modeled after Hannah Arendt who lived near Johnson on Riverside Drive.

[45] "(Auch) Romanfigur von Martin Walser." Kleines Adreßbuch für Jerichow und New York. Ein Register zu Uwe Johnsons Roman "Jahrestage," ed. Rolf Michaelis (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983) 157.

questionable comments which are either ignored or attributed to alcohol: "Der ist immer gleich so schwer angeschlagen" (II, 877). Gesine has little to contribute to the swirl of conversation "in diesem Abbild einer verrottenden Gesellschaft," and leaves. Her unwillingness to speak up becomes grounds for criticism:

> *Mußte sein, Gesine.*
> *Mußte sein.*
> *Wenn du schon hingehst, warum drückst du dich an den Wänden herum?*
> *Damit ich es sehen kann.*
> *Du sollst den Mund aufmachen, Gesine!* (II, 878)

Hye also cites Johnson's use of Hans Magnus Enzensberger's letter, in which he renounces his stipend at Wesleyan University in protest against U.S. involvement in Vietnam. She sees this as evidence of deliberate parallels within the novel, "von Uwe Johnson ausdrücklich durchgeführt."[46] Here again Hye falsely attributes statements to Johnson, and ignores Gesine's subsequent comments on the matter. The parallels, however, are clearly drawn by Enzensberger alone, as demonstrated both in the text and the original document: "So wie in den U.S.A. heutzutage war es in den mittleren dreißiger Jahren in Deutschland" (II, 800). Gesine flatly dismisses his contentions:

> - Naomi, deswegen mag ich in Westdeutschland nicht leben.
> - Weil solche Leute dort Wind machen?
> - Ja. Solche guten Leute. (II, 803)

The last sentence is a direct reference to Johnson's essay, "Über eine Haltung des Protestierens" (1967), in which he pointedly criticizes those who pay lip service to the peace movement only as long as it poses no

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[46] Hye 59.

personal inconvenience: "Die guten Leute wollen eine gute Welt; die guten Leute tun nichts dazu."[47] Enzensberger himself falls into this category. His convictions are of overriding concern only when he fears the loss of his credibility as a leftist intellectual (II, 801-2). Instead of remaining in a place where he potentially might make a difference, he leaves for Cuba: "Er hat eben einfach so den Gedanken, daß er von den Bewohnern Cubas mehr lernen kann ("Freude"), als den Studenten der Wesleyan University an politischer Haltung beibringen" (I, 802). The passage in the novel is markedly similar to the essay in subject matter. Further, both use the same formulated phrase, "solche Leute." Any doubt the passage alludes to the essay as a parallel text is dispelled when Gesine states: "Vietnam ist das Spanien unserer Generation! Das sagen solche Leute" (II, 801). This essay originally appeared in English as part of Authors Take Sides on Vietnam: Two Questions on the War in Vietnam Answered by Authors of Several Nations,[48] which was modeled on an immensely popular collection of essays addressing the Spanish Civil War. The tone of this particular passage in Jahrestage, together with the earlier essay, leaves no question that Gesine and her narrator reject simplistic historical equations put forward by Enzensberger and his contemporaries.

Any direct correlation between America in the 1960s and Germany in the 1930s is also refuted by Johnson. He concedes the reciprocal relationship between the Jerichow and New York narratives, but consistently avoids drawing any unequivocal one-dimensional links between Nazi Germany and the political climate in the U.S during the

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[47] Uwe Johnson, "Über eine Haltung des Protestierens," Berliner Sachen 95.

[48] see Cecil Woolf and John Bagguley, Authors Take Sides on Vietnam: Two Questions on the War in Vietnam Answered by Authors of Several Nations. (London: Peter Owen, 1967).

Vietnam War era. In an interview with Dieter Zimmer he elaborates on the narrative function of associative chains in Jahrestage:

> Es kommen aus der amerikanischen Gegenwart sehr wohl Anstöße, es werden Ereignisse von damals heraufgerufen durch Ereignisse von heute, lediglich aber heraufgerufen. Wenn zum Beispiel bei den Unruhen in Washington eine Häuserzeile ausgebrannt ist, so ist für sie die Folgerung: So sähe ein Krieg in amerikanischen Städten aus--Von diesem Vorstellungsbild kommt sie zurück auf ihren eigenen Krieg, auf das Jahr 1945; daran schließt sich das Sterben des Flughafens Mariengabe bei Jerichow an.[49]

Parallels within the text are purely accidental and arise naturally from the material itself. Johnson brusquely criticized efforts to establish direct correspondences between the two epochs:

> . . . ich hatte vor, diese Person bei ihrem alltäglichen Leben in New York, bei der Erinnerung an das Echo bestandener Tage zu zeigen. Das ist der eine Aspekt der "Jahrestage." Der tägliche Tag ruft die Erinnerung der Vergangenheit herauf, den anderen Aspekt. . . . Sie suchen diametrale Gegensätze, eindeutuge Urteile und rücksichtslose Stellungnahmen. So kann man aber nicht leben.[50]

He repeatedly warns against the inevitable inaccuracies which arise when attempting to assign a specific correlation between present and past events recounted by Gesine:

> Parallelen begegnen sich ja nicht, das eine bedeutet nicht das andere. Ich würde zum Beispiel von einem amerikanischen Faschismus nicht sprechen. Das Wort weist auf die historische Gebundenheit des Phänomens, das sich so nicht wiederholen wird. Amerika hat andere Voraussetzungen, andere Strukturen und wird auch

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[49] Dieter E. Zimmer, "Eine Bewußtseinsinventur. Das Gespräch mit dem Autor: Uwe Johnson," Johnsons "Jahrestage" 101.

[50] Heinz D. Osterle, "Strukturfragen und Todesgedanken. Eine rätselhafte Deutsch-Amerikanerin," Bilder von Amerika: Gespräche mit deutschen Schriftstellern, ed. Heinz D. Osterle (Münster: Englische Amerikanische Studien, 1987) 127.

> andere Formen finden als der italienische oder deutsche Faschismus.[51]

The novel's narrative fabric is much more complex than would be indicated by its bi-level structure. The continuous shifting between subtly differentiated narrative perspectives is a central component of Jahrestage. Polyperspectival narrative is no less important for Gesine's story than for earlier novels. Jahrestage displays the same unequivocal rejection of traditional Balzacian realism as well as of socialist realism's "abgesungene epische Totalität."[52] As elsewhere in Johnson's prose, overlapping and/or competing perspectives call into question the use of traditional narrative categories (i.e. first and third person) which are also employed extensively in the novel.

In Johnson scholarship discussion of Jahrestage's narrative strategies has proved uneven and often contradictory. The only aspects which will be addressed in any detail here are those pertaining to the New York narrative, and particularly his use of documentary materials. However, some background is necessary in order to evaluate widely divergent conclusions concerning the novel's shifting narrative perspectives and the gaps in existing research.

Ingeborg Gerlach reduces the narrative into its two most basic elements. In her paradigm Gesine relates the historical Jerichow story, while the contemporary New York strand is told by her narrative partner. Analyses by Ingeborg Hoesterey and Peter Pokay specifically address Johnson's problematic "Vermischung von auktorialen und personalen

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[51] Zimmer 101.

[52] Hoesterey 24.

Erzählsituationen,"[53] which Gerlach glosses over. Both argue that in Jahrestage Johnson adds a critical twist to the continuous shifting between limited and omniscient narrative perspectives characteristic of the modern novel, in that the tangle of viewpoints is never sorted out within the text. According to Ingeborg Hoestery: "Solches Fragen gehört freilich . . . unmittelbar zur Intention des Textes."[54] It is often difficult to make a clear distinction between multiple viewpoints. The continuous destabilization of narrative integrity is an important, though often overlooked, component of Jahrestage.

Gesine's perceptions of the U.S. and contemporary events are also in constant flux. Of particular interest for this analysis will be the passages incorporated from The New York Times, which is Gesine's only consistent source of information about the U.S. Her knowledge is limited to what she can read and observe. Her experience of the U.S. are fundamentally different from her daughter's. Unlike her mother, Marie is fully assimilated in the culture: ". . . gerade als ein fremder Ankömmling von viereinhalb Jahren hatte sie tüchtiger, gewitzter und amerikanischer werden müssen als die anderen. . . ."[55] Gesine's views on the U.S. are also quite different from those of her fiancé, Dietrich Erichson, who has deliberately shut the door on the past and moved on. She continues to question her sense of identity as an individual, as a German and as a product of her political upbringing. Her perceptions of New York and the U.S. in 1967/8 are tied to her attempt to come to terms with these issues.

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[53] Hoesterey 13.

[54] Hoesterey 13.

[55] Johnson, Begleitumstände 413.

CHAPTER 3
"WIR SIND ZU GAST HIER"
GESINE, NEW YORK CITY AND THE SIXTIES

Long before Gesine leaves for Prague she is acutely aware that the hard-won sense of security provided by her job is tenuous at best. Her survival is guaranteed only from paycheck to paycheck. So she takes advantage of every opportunity within her control, acknowledging that appearance is just as important as substance:

> Ihr kann alle vierzehn Tage gekündigt werden. . . . Sie will keine Versicherung versäumen, nicht einmal die rechtzeitige Anwesenheit am Arbeitsplatz, die optische Präsenz. (I, 84)[1]

However, nothing can insulate her from the fear of random violence or the stress of urban life.

As a resident of New York City, Gesine is aware of a wide variety of problematic social issues either through her own observations or through The New York Times. Social and economic extremes, urban crime, isolation of the underprivileged and the pervasive effects of poverty are all to be found just around the corner from her apartment. It is merely a street or two away: "In den Seitenstraßen zwischen den Avenuen sitzt er inzwischen in vielen der brownstones" (II, 842). The neighborhood market

[1] Uwe Johnson, Jahrestage. All subsequent citations from the novel are indicated by volume and page.

at the corner of 96th Street and Broadway is a cross-section of the ethnically and economically mixed neighborhood. Its diversity illustrates the best and the worst of the American melting-pot:

> . . . damals und heute standen abgerissene Männer an den Hauswänden, Hehler wie Diebe, Betrunkene, Irre, viele afrikanischer Abstammung, arbeitslos, krank, manche bettelnd. Die Sprachen auf diesem Broadway sind vielfältig, verwirrend arbeiten Akzente aller Kontinente an Versionen des Amerikanischen, im Vorbeigehen zu hören sind das Spanisch aus Puertoriko und Cuba, das west-indische Französisch, Japanisch, Chinesisch, Jiddisch, Russisch, die Jargons der Illegalen und immer wieder das Deutsche, wie es vor dreißig Jahren in Ostpreußen, Berlin, Franken, Sachsen, Hessen gesprochen wurde. (I, 27)

She is attracted by the lively diversity that is in marked contrast to Germany in general and the homogeneous village where she grew up in particular. At the same time she is repelled by the privation and suffering in its midst.

Gesine's paper of choice, The New York Times, is full of reports on the Vietnam War as well as on drugs, corruption and racial unrest in the ghettos. The world portrayed in the paper is a daily affront to her well-regulated, insular life in the Upper West Side. These elements are all related to Gesine's crisis of identity: How does one reconcile individual conscience with sociopolitical reality, and at what price? Rolf Becker summarizes the unifying theme of Jahrestage:

> Wie ist mit Anstand zu leben, wie ist gerecht zu urteilen und wahr zu sprechen in einer Welt allseitig haftbar machender Systemzwänge, ihrer ideologischen Täuschungen und parteiischen Sprachregelungen? Wie lebt man mit dem "Bewußtsein schuldnaher Anwesenheit," von dem kein Land- und Staatswechsel Gesine entlasten kann?[2]

[2] R. Becker 191.

The novel's central message is that there is no sanctuary from political reality. The unresolved conflict between personal ideology and harsh sociopolitical reality profoundly affects Gesine's view of events past and present. Gesine enjoys the benefits of a society which is embroiled in a bloody third-world conflict and discriminates against its own citizens. She also wrestles with her family's actions during the Third Reich and what it means to be German in the post-war era. At times she finds that her own identity is synonymous with that of Germany's recent past:

> . . . [gute Freunde von mehreren Jahren] sehen mich, und sie denken an die Verbrechen der Deutschen.
> Ohne die Absicht der Kränkung. Es ist ihnen selbstverständlich, natürlich. So verhält es sich. (II, 851-2)

Johnson noted in a letter that, "as a German, you are not treated as an individual but as a member of a group who did something to the Jews."[3] This theme, which appears in fragmentary form in earlier novels, proves to be the fundamental reason for Gesine's reconstruction of her childhood and her ultimate break with West Germany in Jahrestage.

As a member of the post-war generation, Gesine is the product of a unique set of sociopolitical circumstances. Years of mind-numbing ideological indoctrination--first under the Nazis, then the socialists--have left Gesine with an acute awareness of the sociopolitical forces at work in her daily life. Her German heritage and her life in the U.S. at this particular historical crossroad both incur feelings of guilt--if only by association--which are irreconcilable with her desire to live a morally correct life: "Wäre aber gern ordentlich gewesen, unbeeinflußt von Biographie und Vergangenheit, mit richtigem Leben, in einer richtigen Zeit, mit den richtigen Leuten, zu einem richtigen Zweck" (II, 889). The

[3] Ziegfield, Uwe Johnson and Helen Wolff, manuscript.

discrepancy between her principals and political reality has crippled her ability to act. However, she still continues to shoulder the burden of responsibility and guilt spawned by her continued political passivity. Experience has shown her repeatedly that, as an individual, she is helpless to alter government policy or the priorities of society. Under the current circumstances, Gesine believes political engagement to be futile:

> Ich könnte einen Leserbrief an die New York Times schreiben; ich könnte fürs Leben ins Zuchthaus gehen wegen eines erfolglosen Attentats auf den Präsidenten Johnson; ich könnte mich öffentlich verbrennen. Mit Nichts könnte ich die Maschine des Krieges aufhalten um einen Cent, um einen Soldaten; mit Nichts. (II, 894)

Since all alternatives are flawed in some fundamental way, any attempt at individual action seems futile. While Gesine declines to actively participate in the political process, her destiny is nonetheless governed by political forces as she becomes ever more involved with the Czechoslovakian reform movement professionally and personally.

Within the confines of the tightly regulated calendar structure, Jahrestage chronicles Gesine's search for meaning and identity amidst the uncertainty and upheaval of the late 1960s. Now in her mid-thirties and a parent, she returns to the past to question the fundamental assumptions that define her sense of self and her heritage. In the past Gesine responded to ideological disillusionment under different political systems with flight. She experienced fascism followed by military occupations first by the British, then the Russians in quick succession, "ohne daß man sie das gefragt hatte."[4] Like the other members of her generation in the DDR, she is indoctrinated in socialist philosophy at school. Although Gesine retains

[4] Johnson, "Einführung in die 'Jahrestage'" 21.

her idealistic political convictions regardless of circumstances, she is acutely aware of the hypocrisy rampant in socialism as it really exists:

> Sie hat also den Sozialismus auf der Schule gehabt, und zwar theoretisch, d.h. in dem Sinne, daß der Lehrer wußte, daß man log, und daß man wußte, daß der Lehrer wußte, daß man log, also eine perfekte Allround-Verständigung, die aber dann den Lehrstoff, soweit es den Sozialismus betrifft, auf etwas Theoretisches begrenzt. Als dann der Lehrstoff sich wirklich machte, im Juni 1953, auf den Straßen der Republik, mit einem veritablen Aufstand der Arbeiter, nicht der Bauern, aber der Arbeiter, gegen die sozialistische Regierung, bekam diese Schülerin Gesine Cressphal Angst vor der Wirklichkeit des Sozialismus und floh blindlings nach Westberlin: Sie lief weg. Obwohl sie wußte: Moralisch, politisch, zukunftsbewußt gesehen, tu ich mir das Schlimmste an, was ich tun kann, ich geh in die Vergangenheit, ich gehe zu dem schlechten Entwurf des Lebens, ich gehe zu dem menschenverachtenden Kapitalismus.

Before arriving in New York, Gesine has already failed twice to come to terms with sociopolitical realities. As outlined in Jahrestage, Gesine is propelled by political events from East to West Germany, and finally to New York. Despite her disappointments, these experiences have only intensified her utopian longings for a truly humane and just society. The violent put-down of demonstrating workers during the June 17, 1953 Uprising put an end to her childish political ideals: "Kinderwünsche . . . Sozialismus etcetera" (II, 990). In a 1983 interview Johnson explains the significance of this event for Gesine:

> Ihr ist ja der Sozialismus auf der Schule als die einzig menschenmögliche Alternative beigebracht worden. Aus dieser Illusion ist sie durch Ereignisse auf der Straße von dem Landgericht Gneez in Mecklenburg aufgeschreckt worden. Das war die erste Warnung, sie wollte sich diesem Widerspruch nicht aussetzen. Sie war konsequent genug, von dieser Unklarheit wegzugehen in eine Gegend, die sie damals für die

> schlimmste der Welt hielt und halten mußte--so war es in der Schule gelehrt worden--in den Westen, in den Kapitalismus. Hat hier überlebt, aber doch jene sozialistische Idee, Alternative, weiterhin vor Augen gehabt, schon weil sie Heimat betraf, weil sie ja Mecklenburg verwaltete. [5]

The reforms promised in early June were never implemented (IV, 1897). Subsequent Soviet military intervention demonstrated "wer in diesem Land regiert: die Sowjets" (IV, 1853). Later, Russian intervention in the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, which plays a pivotal role in Mutmaßungen über Jakob, further emphasizes the discrepancy between the classroom ideology and the real-world practices of socialist leaders. It effectively rules out any possibility of Gesine's permanent return to Jakob and Jerichow. West German proved equally disappointing, if for other disquieting reasons:

> Ich wollte aus dem Land, für eine Weile. Am Weihnachtsabend 1959 war in Köln, in der Nachbarschaft, eine Synagoge mit Hakenkreuzen beschmiert worden und mit Sprüchen: 'Deutsche fordern Juden raus.' Das war das eine. . . . Das andere war die Karriere eines Politikers in der westdeutschen Republik. (IV, 1872)

Violence, whether real or threatened, used as a tool of control and repression is a common denominator between Jahrestage's Jerichow and New York narratives. This same specter of brutal government intervention casts a shadow over the last few days comprising the novel's conclusion. Gesine's arrival in Prague coincides with that of Russian tanks.

Like other Johnson protagonists such as Jakob Abs and Karsch, Gesine finds it difficult--if not impossible--to reconcile her ideals with her surroundings. For Jakob neither the East's repressive version of socialism

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[5] Jürgen Becker, Rolf Michaelis and Heinrich Vormweg, "Gespräch mit Uwe Johnson (Am 8. Dezember 1983 in Köln)," "Ich überlege mir die Geschichte . . ." Uwe Johnson im Gespräch, ed. Eberhard Fahlke (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1988) 309.

nor the West's democratic capitalism represent a viable alternative. Karsch's failed biography of Achim lay bare the irreconcilable differences between East and West. In the short story, "Eine Reise wegwohin, 1960," Karsch leaves both Germany behind in favor of Italy's comparative neutrality only to later run afoul of the Mafia. At the close of Zwei Ansichten, D.'s escape to the West is not an escape to a new reality but a flight from the old: "Manchmal . . . wäre sie bedenkenlos mitgegangen, hätte einer sie über die Grenze bringen wollen, einfach aus Überdruß, ohne viel Hoffnung, sich zu verbessern" (ZA, 195). In each case flight does not represent forward motion. It is the meaningless exchange of one morally bankrupt political reality for another, as characterized by his own emigration from East to West Germany which he describes as the "Rückgabe einer Staatsangehörigkeit an die DDR nach nur zehnjähriger Benutzung."[6] Johnson himself was another disillusioned socialist but an unwilling emigre. Although he resided intermittently in West Berlin, Johnson spent most of his life in self-imposed exile in Italy and the United States before finally settling in the isolated fishing village of Sheerness-on-Sea, England in 1974. He remained there until his death in 1983. For Johnson exile was the result of default rather than choice: "die Fremde war schon gleich, nachdem es Heimat nicht sein konnte."[7] This is a consistent theme in Johnson's prose and is true of his own life experience after 1959.

In depicting the quintessential metropolis of New York City, which New York Times editor and columnist James Reston called the "Mecca of

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[6] Uwe Johnson, "Vita," Über Uwe Johnson, ed. Reinhard Baumgart (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1970) 175.

[7] Wiegenstein 212.

my Generation,"[8] Johnson follows in the tradition established by such writers as Alexander Döblin (Berlin Alexanderplatz, 1929) and John Dos Passos (U.S.A., 1937), who depict the modern metropolis as a microcosm of an alienated, dysfunctional society. The complexities of urban life are conveyed through the juxtaposition of multiple narrative strands, including alternative narrative devices such as stream of consciousness, "camera eye," collage, montage, and the juxtaposition of images. The cinematic narrative flow is often interrupted by the incision of documentary materials. Johnson's own experimental narrative approach, exhibited in such works as Mutmaßungen über Jakob, Das dritte Buch über Achim and Eine Reise nach Klagenfurt, represents a veritable"Potpourri aller Stilexperimente . . . von Faulkner und Brecht bis Döblin und Robbe-Grillet und Strittmatter und J.R. Becher."[9] In Jahrestage, Johnson has refined the his narrative style: the layering of multiple--and sometimes contradictory--narrative perspectives. The authenticity of the various viewpoints is constantly destabilized by unresolved questions and discrepancies arising within the narrative itself. Overlapping first- and third-person narrators recount Gesine's past and present stories. Her unvarying daily reality, as established by the novel's calendar structure, is often framed by contemporary events taken from the newspaper and other sources. Occasionally other items of realia are included such as descriptions of a subway map, a radio broadcast on Cardinal Spellman's death, and television coverage of Robert Kennedy's funeral. Johnson's generous use of factual materials imparts the impression of a more traditional narrative mode than in earlier works. A closer examination of

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[8] "New York Times: Brunnen der Geschichte," Spiegel 13 May 1968: 140.

[9] Hermann Kesten, "Mutmaßungen über Uwe Johnson," Die Welt 25 Nov. 1961.

narrative practice in Jahrestage demonstrates that it remains in essence "a novel of consciousness,"[10] and differs only in superficial technical respects from the narrative complexity which distinguishes Johnson's earlier prose.

The function of the documentary materials is twofold. In the Jerichow narrative they substantiate and flesh out Gesine's childhood memories, which are often fragmentary and unreliable. In some instances they are little more than impressions strung together by speculation. There are no first-hand memories at all for reconstructing the fateful chain of events which brought her parents from England to Mecklenburg the same year Hitler came into power. It occurs to Gesine that her German identity is a quirk of fate: ". . . um 35 oder schon um 30 passiert manchen Leuten das, daß sie sich zu fragen beginnen, warum bin ich in Mecklenburg geboren, und mußte das 1933 sein? Und was haben meine Eltern sich gedacht?"[11] These basic questions of identity which arise from their actions are the genesis of Gesine's reconstructive process.

The first two hundred odd pages of Jahrestage, which recount her parent's courtship and the newlyweds' strife-filled months in England, clearly lie outside the scope of Gesine's personal knowledge. These early scenes are a compilation of available materials, hearsay and conjecture. When she visits Richmond as an adult, Gesine tries to reconcile the past and the present with what might have been had her parents only remained in England. At this point the weaknesses of the reconstructive process are exposed, causing Gesine to turn inward and challenge her own assumptions and expectations. That which emerges in the month of

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[10] Ryan 156.

[11] Lehner 108.

November as Gesine's central conflict--the question of identity (i.e. being German in a post-war world)--hangs on a simple twist of fate. Her destiny is sealed when Heinrich Cresspahl joins his estranged wife and infant daughter in Germany despite his distaste for the ruling National Socialist Party. Given what she knows of her father and his convictions, Heinrich Cresspahl's decision to leave a thriving business in England to settle in the small town of Jerichow is inexplicable. His wife, Lisbeth, had returned to Mecklenburg for the birth of their child. When Heinrich prepares to return home after the christening, she refuses to go. Alone in Richmond, "Cresspahl konnte acht Monate von außen zusehen, wie die Nazis ihren Staat einrichteten" (II, 733). Gesine cannot fathom--or forgive--what seems to be an ideological and moral capitulation:

> *Warum bist du denn hingefahren zum Krieg.*
> *War doch noch nicht zu sehen, Gesine.*
> *Doch.*
> *Ne.* (I, 391)

The fact remains that her father returned on March 21, 1933, the same day "an dem ein Irrer names Hitler von einem alten Feldmarschall das Deutsche Reich in demütiger Verbeugung entgegennahm" (I, 331). She accuses him of putting short-term personal concerns ahead of moral considerations: *"Du harst din Fru n Dürschlant, un süss hest du di nich vel dacht. / Süss hev'ck mi nich vel dacht* (I, 392)." Moral authority is a double edged sword, as Gesine discovers when she castigates her father for not seeing the writing on the wall. She is herself confronted with her own failure to act:

> *Wo sittst denn du, Gesine? Kannstu din Kriech nich seihn? Worüm geihst du nich wech, dat du kein Schult krichst? Du kennst dat nu doch as dat iss mit de Kinner. Wat secht Marie, wenn se't merkt hett?* (I, 391)

At this point in the novel Gesine's moral authority rests solely on her own ability to face the same unflinching criticism she directs at her family, especially her father. Her debilitating passivity in political issues, however, is not overcome until the close of Jahrestage.

As a direct result of her parents' decisions, her sense of identity is irrevocably linked to Hitler's *Großdeutschland* and the actions undertaken in its name: ". . . ich bin das Kind eines Vaters, der von der planmäßigen Ermordung der Juden gewußt hat (I, 232)." Despite belonging to the generation granted "die Gnade der späten Geburt," Gesine feels in no way exonerated. Unlike her father, Gesine knew nothing at the time of what was going on behind the scenes. Happy childhood memories of a summer at the shore result from blissful ignorance:

> Heute weiß ich, daß die Ferien von anderer Art waren. Nicht weit von Althagen, auf der anderen Seite des Saaler Bodens, war das Konzentrationslager Barth. . . . Wir wußten es nicht. Hilde Paepcke ist mit uns nach Barth gefahren, über die Drehbrücke, damit wir die Stadt ansahen. Wir haben nichts gesehen. Die Bahnstrecke, auf der Cresspahls Kind zum Fischland kam, passierte Rövershagen. In Rövershagen war ein Konzentrationslager, dessen Häftlinge für die Ernst Heinkel Flugzeugwerke A.G. arbeiten mußten. Heute weiß ich es. (II, 955)

Gesine's blurred impressions of Rövershagen framed by the train window have nothing to do with reality. The sudden shift in narrative perspective from collective first person to third person reflects the alienation between reality and memory for her generation. As an adult armed with factual information she can place a childhood memory in its proper context. While this rectifies an instance of *verfälschte Vergangenheit,* it is at the same time an act of destruction. The memories upon which identity is based are

not just questioned, but nullified. Links between the adult Gesine and the alienated "Kind, das ich war" (IV, 1891)[12] must be reforged. Objective knowledge gained through the comparison between personal experience and documentary materials becomes a powerful component in the process. Thus in Jahrestage the reconstruction of the past becomes synonymous with the reconstruction of identity, beginning with the most basic building blocks.

Almost thirty-five years later Gesine attempts to recreate the circumstances which sealed her identity as a German. As she walks the streets of Richmond, England--which would have formed the backdrop of her childhood under other circumstances--Gesine repeatedly asks herself, "Was wissen wir noch?" History and politics have rendered the landscape unrecognizable: "Wir müssen weiter durch die Zeit, umso undurchdringlicher als vergangen. Jetzt sind wir wo du warst" (I, 287). In her attempt at reconstruction, Gesine is subject to the same restrictions on what she can, and cannot, know that Johnson places on the narrator. She can easily fabricate the image of a pregnant Lisbeth: "Es ist möglich, hier ist sie gegangen im Winter 1932, vorsichtig mit ihrem schweren Bauch zwischen den aufgeregten Kindern, die der Arbeit eines Tauchers zusahen" (I, 333). But Gesine can only trace her footsteps, not her thoughts. The answers to her most basic questions remain inaccessible. Her failure to reconstruct her parents motivations throw three of Jahrestage's central themes into sharp relief: the problems of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, loss of *Heimat*, and lastly, the search for truth and the limits of such an undertaking.

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[12] This phrase, with which Jahrestage closes, is a frequent motif in the text (see for example: 489, 1008, 1017, 1743, 1891).

Johnson again calls attention to the significance of this particular event in another short piece, "Interview with Marie H. Cresspahl," in which Marie traces her mother's and grandmother's path through the streets of Richmond:

> [Lisbeth] soll hier gegangen sein im Winter 1932, allein, schwanger mit Gesine. So wie Gesine es erzählt hat, muß ich es annehmen als wirklich und vergangen und out of reach. Unerreichbar. Kann ich nichts bei machen.[13]

Her parents' return to Germany is a central event for Gesine, whose entire sense of identity is linked to this one decision. Marie, however, considers it only a minor point. Marie, as the beneficiary of Gesine's mistakes, accepts with resignation Gesine's version of the past as flawed but adequate. The reasons are for her less important than the facts. Gesine's attempts at reconstruction, "bis es ausreichte zum Erzählen,"[14] is valuable only for what it reveals about her mother. Unlike Gesine, who considers New York an intermediate station en route to a politically perfect permanent residence, Marie considers herself American:

> Ihre hat die Bogen und Schleifen der amerikanischen Vorlage. Beim Malnehmen schreibt sie den Multiplikator unter, nicht eben den Multiplikanden. Sie denkt in Fahrenheitgraden, in Gallonen, in Meilen. Ihr Englisch ist dem Gesines überlegen in der Artikulation, der Satzmelodie, dem Akzent. Deutsch ist für sie eine fremde Sprache, die sie aus Höflichkeit gegen die Mutter benutzt, im flachem Ton, mit amerikanisch gebildeten Vokalen, oft verlegen um ein Wort. Wenn sie achtlos Englisch spricht, versteht Gesine sie nicht immer. (I, 22-3)

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[13] Johnson, "Interview with Marie H. Cresspahl 2.-3. Januar 1972," Johnsons "Jahrestage" 74.

[14] "Interview with Marie H. Cresspahl" 75.

Only four years old when they left Germany, she is "ein Kind von New York"[15] and knows where she belongs: "Ich möchte nirgends leben, nur in New York: sagt sie" (I, 259). Unlike Gesine, she has completely assimilated. Jerichow and the events which are of such vital importance to her mother are the stuff of stories.

Initially, Gesine clings to the belief that she would be contemplating an entirely different--and eminently preferable--childhood had her parent's story unfolded in a different context:

> Ich wäre jemand anders, bis auf den Namen. Ich wäre nicht deutsch; ich würde von den Deutschen sprechen in einem fremden und entfernten Plural. (I, 334)

This alternate geography of her life would allowed a return and closure made impossible by history and politics:

> Ich käme zurück auf den Friedhof Sheen, der im Norden viel Grasland hat. Da wäre noch Platz gewesen in dem weißen Geflacker der sehr dünn ausgesägten Kreuze und Figuren. Wären sie hier gestorben, hier könnte ich meinen Eltern Besuche abstatten. Hätten sie hier gelebt, wir wären im Leben zusammen gewesen. (I, 335)

Instead, Gesine lives in uneasy exile. She is barred physically and politically from the DDR. Morally, she cannot rationalize a return to the BRD. Gesine elaborates her reasons on tape for Marie:

> Aber in Deutschland möchte ich nicht noch ein Mal leben. Im Westen haben sie eine Nazipartei, und die Nazipartei hat eine Schlägertruppe gegründet und gibt der Presse darüber eine Konferenz. Und die Presse kommt. Die Abkürzung für die Saalschützer ist S.G., von Schützgemeinschaft, und der Obernazi kann und kann da keine Anspielung auf die S.A. Hitlers verstehen, die auch als Ordner angefangen haben. Und von "Blutsverbundenheit" reden die auch schon wieder, wenn ich

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[15] "Interview with Marie H. Cresspahl" 76.

> common blood nicht falsch auffasse. In Deutschland möchte ich nicht noch einmal leben. (I, 422)

As an outside observer in England Gesine would have escaped the double burdens of German guilt and exile which have profoundly affected her, although it offered no guaranteed sanctuary from the war. This parallel existence is symbolized by Heinrich's illegitimate son by Mrs. Trowbridge. Mother and son both are eventually killed during the war:

> Cresspahl hatte im September eine Nachricht bekommen. Sie seien am 14. November 1940 bei einem Angriff auf die britischen Midlands ums Leben gekommen. (III, 1209)

The fact that, but for a move across the Channel, Gesine would be grappling with an entirely different set of problems underscores a recurrent theme in Johnson's fiction of an individual swept along by the overwhelming forces of politics and history.

Gesine is forced to confront circumstances which even the most optimistic storytelling cannot alter: the war, her parent's basic incompatibility, her mother's instability. It is possible that in England Lisbeth could have survived the war, and eventually come to terms with both her marriage and inner demons. Gesine fantasizes that her mother might still be alive today: ". . . sie aber hätte hier überlebt, und in eine jener roten Säulen mit dem Topfdeckel ohne Henkel könnte sich noch heute Briefe einwerfen nach New York: Liebe Tochter" (I, 332). In an imaginary exchange her mother points out the futility of such speculation:

> *So weit bin ich in meinem Leben nicht gekommen, Tochter. Das kann ich nicht wissen, und nicht versprechen.* (I, 333)

Still, Gesine cannot bring herself to absolve her father of responsibility for the eventual outcome of his decision to leave England.

At the beginning of the narrative sequence which recounts the events resulting in Heinrich's fateful decision to join his family in Jerichow, Marie squeamishly begs her mother to alter her story: "Ich mag nicht was nun folgt: sagt Marie: Kannst du es nicht ändern?"[16] (I, 296). Gesine steadfastly refuses to stray any further from the facts as she knows them, and states flatly: "Mehr ändern kann ich es nicht."[17] At most she is prepared to interpret them with some understanding and compassion. She grants he could have ignored his conscience either out of weakness or out of love. Still, she is reluctant to close the door on what might have been. The problems posed by *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* cannot be solved with a change of location or nationality. Nor can the Cresspahl's participation in a national tragedy be reduced to the simplistic motivations of a homesick girl, and of those a man simply trying to save his marriage.

Gesine is a woman without roots. Unlike Marie and D.E., Gesine continues to consider herself a visitor with no particular bond to New York or the U.S. She tells her daughter, "Wir sind hier zu Gast." Marie, who is committed to her new homeland despite recognized problems, replies , "Wir leben hier" (II, 810). Because Gesine makes no real emotional or political commitment to the U.S., any sense of disappointment or outrage is muted.

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[16] For other examples see further Jahrestage 296-300.

[17] Jahrestage 300.
- Warum sagt er ihr nicht: Nimm das Kind, nimm dich zusammen, geh hinter mir her?
- Du bist sonst nicht für Gewalt, Marie.
- Es ging nicht darum, Gewalt zu vermeiden. Er hatte Angst.
- Er hatte Angst, sie zu verlieren.
- Er war feige! Er wollte nicht wissen, wozu sie notfalls imstande war!

Her outsider status becomes a way to avoid guilt and political engagement in "eine Art Immunisierungsstrategie."[18] Any feeling of belonging is temporary and illusory: "Es ist eine Täuschung, und fühlt sich an wie Heimat" (I, 134). These images of "Heimat" occasionally evoked by the weather or Staten Island, "Mecklenburg in New York,"[19] are reminders of a Jerichow that has been permanently lost. By perpetuating her outsider status in the early part of the novel, Gesine is able to both rationalize her stay in the U.S. and her lack of political engagement:

> Es geht uns nicht an, wir sind hier Gäste, wir sind nicht schuldig. Wir sind noch nicht schuldig. In Vietnam fallen mehr Amerikaner als Südstaatsoldaten, und General Westmoreland hat mehr davon bestellt. (I, 90)

She is, however, critical of those who change their sociopolitical venue as a matter of personal convenience. Hans Magnus Enzensberger is the novel's most infamous example. She takes an equally dim view of a German actor who reframes his return to the DDR as a political statement, rather than as a matter of professional expedience.

Hope for the future is reawakened when, as a result of a promotion at the bank, Gesine has a chance to help Dubcek's government realize a new form of liberal socialism--a longed for "dritter Weg"--in Czechoslovakia. In the latter half of the novel this gradually supplants the invariably depressing news from Southeast Asia and the BRD, a shift in coverage which is not based on coverage in the newspaper itself. Although it is clear

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[18] Beckes 68.

[19] "Es ist Mecklenburg, was wir da sehen, Gesine Cresspahls Heimat, mitten in New York. . . . Wiesen, dazwischen ein Sandweg, hinter Bäumen die Nadelspitze einer kleinen Kirche. Es ist mehr als déjà vu, es ist wie Rückkehr in die Kindheit." Klaus Podak, "Auf den Spuren von Gesine Cresspahl, Johnsons "Jahrestage" 348.

in the the course of the year that Gesine is moving gradually toward a recommitment to socialism, the Vietnam War is the measuring stick against which her progress is gauged.

Along with the Prague Spring's role in Gesine Cresspahl's personal story, the Vietnam War is Jahrestage's most pervasive and influential thematic and structural component.[20] The progress of the Vietnam War is one of several contemporary strands which Gesine follows throughout the course of 1967/8. Of all the issues having bearing on the novel, New York Times items concerning the war are the most consistent and frequent. In this aspect, Gesine's concern with the issue mirrors its prominence in the American psyche as well as the national press. The articles cover the spectrum of issues which make up traditional war coverage: battle reports, assessments, administrative policy, body counts, congressional debate and political posturing. These items through their very repetition often border on the mundane, despite their disturbing content.

For a variety of reasons the importance of the Vietnam War, and the "Vietnam era" as a whole, in Jahrestage is frequently eclipsed by the role of the Prague Spring in criticism. As a practical consideration, Dubcek's failed reforms and the subsequent Russian intervention was, of course, of greater relevance to Germany than the Vietnam conflict, in which Germany had no political or military involvement. But the problems with Johnson's use of the Vietnam war in Jahrestage are both structural and ideological. Two aspects in particular are consistently targeted. Quite correctly, critics point to the war's suddenly diminished role in the fourth

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20 According to the Gallup Poll, the Vietnam War is also cited above other competing issues as the most important problem facing the U.S. during the years 1966-72. See further the article by William L. Lunch and Peter W. Sperlich, "American Public Opinion and the War in Vietnam," Western Political Quarterly 32 (1979): 21.

volume, as Gesine's personal and professional lives become ever more intertwined in the evolving political situation in Czechoslovakia. The second area of contention is that the novel's portrayal from a predominantly mainstream American perspective runs counter to prevailing attitudes among the German intellectual left. Until 1967 polls indicate that the public generally supported the government's policy. Lunch and Shipman describe this lack of public concern as a textbook example of the relationship between the administration and its constituency as long as the situation is perceived to be going well: "As long as the administration seems to have foreign affairs in hand, and nothing seems unduly alarming, the vast majority of citizens are content to follow the President's leadership."[21] Since Gesine turns to The New York Times, which has a prominent role in communicating administrative policy and shaping national attitudes, for almost all of her information on the war the picture of the Vietnam War which emerges in Jahrestage is very different from that found in Kursbuch, or in the writings of Johnson's friends and contemporaries such as Günter Grass, Martin Walser and others.

The general consensus among critics is that the fall-off in war coverage in the novel's closing weeks represents a failure on Johnson's part to sustain the theme throughout the course of the novel. The Vietnam issue is seemingly jettisoned in favor of the Prague Spring. But I would argue that Gesine's growing interest level in Czechoslovakian affairs is unrelated to the diminished role of Vietnam towards the novel's close. Instead, a closer look at the novel and documentary sources clearly shows that the novel merely reflects a national trend as embodied in The New York Times and other media following extensive, intense, emotional

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[21] Lunch and Sperlich 22.

coverage during the Tet offensive. Even the national weekly news magazine, Der Spiegel, whose coverage of U.S. news is overwhelmingly dominated by the war, official policy and political fallout, exhibits a marked decrease in articles on Vietnam after the Tet offensive. This is especially noticeable during the months of July and August, the same two months chronicled in the novel's final volume. Further, Gesine's loss of interest in the Vietnam conflict is one of appearance only. Although the number and frequency of newspaper items in the novel does fall off markedly beginning in late June 1968, the interrelationship between Gesine and Vietnam is reinforced in key passages during July and August, especially in the novel's closing pages where she looks back on her stay in New York City in which war events appear as milestones (IV, 1877-8).

The dichotomy between German and American perceptions of Vietnam is well illustrated by differences in press coverage. General differences can be established by examining coverage in Der Spiegel. While the format and focus are differ from those of a daily newspaper, such as The New York Times, the weekly is comparable in bread and depth of international reporting, journalistic stature and reputation for factual accuracy. And, in the analysis of Jahrestage, the comparison between The New York Times and Der Spiegel is particularly relevant. Both Gesine and Johnson were devoted readers of the magazine while in New York,[22] which was available at the same kiosk on 42nd Street where Gesine bought her paper each morning. The magazine's role in his fiction is documented both in Jahrestage itself and Johnson's series of Frankfurt Lectures, published under the title Begleitumstände (1980). A complete set of the

[22] see Jahrestage 211, 1338, 1748.

magazine stood next to his writing desk in Sheerness, upon which he relied in the writing of Jahrestage.

An article from 18 September 1967, "Vielleicht zufällig," is typical of the weekly coverage of the Vietnam War in Der Spiegel.[23] The bulk of the article is devoted to recent developments in American foreign policy, with scant mention of battle details and casualties. There are two items of special interest. The first is McNamara's plan to create a fortified border between North and South Vietnam. The second is President Johnson's increasingly sticky predicament as the election looms ever closer. Without a total resolution of the conflict or a believable plan to achieve this end, his chances of reelection are zero. Yet any decisive escalation to bring about a timely end to the war would almost certainly lead to a head-to-head confrontation with Red China. This article also addresses North Vietnamese born attorney Truong Dinh Dzu's surprisingly strong second place finish in the recent South Vietnamese presidential election. In most respects this article's factual content does not differ significantly from articles appearing in the mainstream American press. However, some differences are immediately obvious.

Despite similarities in factual content, Spiegel articles tend to display an analytical slant critical of the situation in Southeast Asia, whereas The Times editorial policy advocated "facts only" reporting. Items are typically separated out into compartmentalized articles linked visually in the page layout or with printed references. Any political and military analyses appeared in a separate sidebar article and are clearly labeled as such. Der Spiegel, like the International section's format in the American national

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23 These events occurred during the last week of August. For instance, McNamara's report on his latest Vietnam tour appears in The New York Times on 26 August.

weekly, Time, condenses marginally related news items into a single article. For example, most Spiegel items include both Washington policy reports and news from the war arena in the same article, inviting parallels and associations between the two. These items would usually appear in separate articles in The New York Times, perhaps even on different pages. The presentation and perception of the same news items is quite different in the two formats.

In many instances, coverage of the Vietnam war in Der Spiegel conveys a political bias absent in The New York Times. For example, the escalating tension between the U.S. and China and the possible nuclear repercussions are mentioned regularly in Spiegel coverage. The "domino effect" theory, should communist forces prevail against the South Vietnamese army, was central to the formation of American foreign policy in Southeast Asia. Clearly, a nuclear power with a population quickly nearing one billion figured significantly in political and military strategy. But unlike Der Spiegel, there was little in the American press by way of a sustained serious discussion during 1967 of a possible future conflict between the U.S. and China, other than the government's consistent assurance that an American success in Vietnam would preclude further communist incursions in Southeast Asia. War hawks, like presidential candidate Richard Nixon, criticized Johnson's North Vietnam bombing strategy. For example, Time Magazine reports a Nixon campaign speech where he predicts that Johnson's misguided policies would "drag (the war) into the 70s, with growing risks of a confrontation with China as Peking's nuclear weaponry improves." But the article concludes, that "Nixon

seemed to be going against a gathering party consensus."[24] To the German press, the situation was perceived quite differently. For instance, any escalation designed to bring the war to a swift and decisive close could prove disastrous: ". . . etwa eine Invasion Nordvietnams, die vollständige Zerstörung des Landes oder Angriffe auf Basen in China--brächte die Welt an den Abgrund eines Atomkrieges."[25] Another Spiegel article from July 10, 1967, characterizes President Johnson as carefully considering further investment of money, manpower and prestige "für einen Kampf, den Amerika längst nicht mehr gegen Nordvietnam, sondern mit dem Blick auf die Supermacht Rotchina führt."[26] From Germany's point of view further escalation was not to bring about an early end to the Vietnam War, but was in anticipation of "dem von Washington erwarteten Showdown mit dem erwachten gelben Riesen China."[27] This particular political reality is one which Spiegel confidently declares "kaum ein US-Generalstäbler bestreitet heute noch."[28] In terms of American press coverage, any hypothetical denial was superfluous since no one seemed to be talking about it.

Like the TV press, Der Spiegel gives significant space to protesters in 1967, describing one group of D.C. demonstrators as "heitere Hippies mit blühenden Blumen und bärtige Linke mit Porträts des gefallenen Guerilla-

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[24] Time 25 Aug. 1967: 16.

[25] "Vielleicht zufällig," Spiegel 18 Sep. 1967: 120.

[26] "Vielleicht zufällig,"Spiegel 18 Sep. 1967: 120.

[27] "Vietnamkrieg: 25 Jahre," Spiegel 10 Jul. 1967: 76.

[28] see "Vietnamkrieg: 25 Jahre," Spiegel 10 Jul. 1967: 76.

Helden Guevara."[29] At this point in the antiwar movement, they were still operating on the social fringe. In addition, such articles were often the only ones in the issue dealing with Vietnam, and tended to combine war news and war policy news in a single article. This results in the linking of items not necessarily linked in the American press. In Der Spiegel, the line between separate incidents and issues frequently becomes blurred.

One Spiegel article, chosen at random, indicates how extreme differences in American and German perceptions were. The article from the September 4, 1967 issue, "Sofort raus?", reports on Robert McNamara's latest visit to the war arena. His characterization, also published in the American press, of the air war at the current level of intensity was blunt and critical: "Bomben können Nordvietnam nicht in die in die Knie zwingen."[30] But in the article's lead paragraph glosses over McNamara's report which monopolizes American headlines. Instead the focus is on possible impeachment proceedings against Johnson. The Spiegel supposition is based on two mentions of the word in relationship to Johnson. The first mention appears in an eleven line note[31] of Johnson's fifty-ninth birthday in Time, which points out that Andrew Jackson was fifty-nine when impeached. The second mention was made by dove Sen. William Fulbright, Dem. Arkansas, in a television interview. The article paraphrases Fulbright's statements thus: "Die einzig wirksame Sanktion des Kongresses gegen eine weitere Eskalation des Vietnam Krieges 'ist ein

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29 "Demonstranten: Über den Fluß," Spiegel 30 Oct. 1967: 144.

30 "Sofort raus," Spiegel 4 Sep. 1967: 102-104.

31 If this seems rather paltry, it is perhaps explained by the extensive photo spread on Johnson and his three years in office in the previous issue of Time.

Impeachment.'"[32] After a lengthy buildup, finally, in the eighth paragraph, the probability of such proceedings is admitted to be nil, or to again quote Fulbright, "politisch wohl nicht durchführbar." A look at the American press gives a quite different picture. In the birthday notice, Time simply notes that 59 was a tough year for three presidents for a variety of reasons: "Andrew Johnson was impeached, Benjamin Harrison lost his bid for reelection and F.D.R. brought the U.S. into World War II."[33] The parallel to Harrison is the most plausible, given that a July Gallup poll showed 52% of American disapproved of Johnson's handling of the war.[34] Johnson's approval rating had tumbled precipitously since his June meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister, Aleksei Kosygin, from 52% to 39%. To date only President Truman's approval rating of 31% was lower.[35]

Interestingly, Fulbright's mention of impeachment does not appear in Time or in The New York Times. According to the New York Times, Fulbright's only reported television appearance during that time period was on ABC's "Issues and Answers," where he discussed a possible repeal of the Bay of Tonkin Resolution of 1964, which was at the crux of a power struggle between the President and the Senate.[36] While accusing the President of misleading Congress about the Bay of Tonkin Incident,

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[32] "Sofort raus," 102.

[33] Time 1 Sep. 1967: 43.

[34] Time 11 Aug. 1967: 11.

[35] Time 18 Aug. 1967: 18.

[36] The 1964 Bay of Tonkin Resolution was cited repeatedly by President Johnson as the basis of his authority for deploying 467,00 American troops to Vietnam and the bombing of North Vietnam. Fulbright was especially bitter about Johnson's perceived deception. At the time Chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, Fulbright personally shepherded the resolution through the Senate on the President's behalf. Johnson later challenged Congress to try and repeal the resolution.

Fulbright seems conciliatory rather than confrontational. Admitting that a repeal was unlikely, he states in the interview "Politically this [repeal] would be a direct slap at a leader in time of war. It will not be done that way, the disillusion, the dissent, that will be expressed in other less direct ways."[37] The Spiegel article emphasizes that "[die USA] in zweieinhalb Jahren mehr Bomben auf Nordvietnam geworfen haben als auf Deutschland während des zweiten Weltkriegs."[38] Ironically, the Johnson administration is under intense criticism for not committing 100% of military capabilities to the bombing campaign during this same week. Republicans are vocal in their call for wider, more intensive airstrikes against the North Vietnamese. Humanitarian issues must be weighed against American loss of life. On the floor of the House, Republican House Leader Gerald Ford demanded, "Why are we still pulling our air power punch?"[39] In opposition, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and others suggest that an unconditional halt to bombing might bring Hanoi to the conference table, a key condition if Johnson was to have any shot at reelection in 1968. With Johnson unable to communicate a clear sense of what America was doing in Southeast Asia, the power struggle between Johnson and the Senate heightened tensions further. The public was increasingly frustrated with a lack of concrete progress, but still impeachment does not appear to be a part of the national vocabulary at the time, despite Der Spiegel's allegations to the contrary.

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37 The New York Times 21 Aug. 1967: 1.

38 "Sofort raus," 104.

39 Time 18 Aug. 1967: 17.

Rather than emphasizing the rift between Johnson and Congress, The New York Times instead minimizes the fractiousness of the debate by showing that even Fulbright publicly admits the Senate has little chance of overturning the Bay of Tonkin Resolution, and that in fact such a move could undermine Johnson's role as Commander in Chief. Normally a vocal antiwar proponent, Fulbright seeks to avoid a head-to-head confrontation with the President in the interest of national solidarity, while still "demanding a more substantive role for Congress in the conduct of foreign affairs in general."[40] This comparison of news items taken from just a single week in late August 1967 demonstrates how perceptions in the American and German press are starkly different in several instances.

Another example which clearly illustrates the divergent positions of American and German press on the Vietnam War issue is the publication of Mary McCarthy's essay, "Report from Vietnam," which explores the war's impact on the Vietnamese economy, political life and people. It was published at roughly the same time in the U.S. and Germany, with interesting and illustrative results.

An internationally renowned writer and literary critic, Mary McCarthy is best known for her unemotional observations, satirical wit and acerbic style, such as in her best-selling novel, The Group (1963). As a vehement antiwar advocate, McCarthy sought to capitalize on both her standing in the intellectual community and as a popular author in getting her message out. She believed her success provided her with "an immense audience that she felt might listen to her about what she saw as the

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[40] Time 11 Aug. 1967: 10.

immoral American military presence in Vietnam."[41] After finally securing a press visa in early 1967. She spent a month touring South Vietnam with a brief stopover in Cambodia. The resulting essay, "Report from Vietnam," was published in The New York Review of Books in the late spring of 1967.[42] Significantly, the magazine is characterized as "the hot intellectual magazine of the Sixties"[43] and served as a platform for the intellectual Leftist agenda. The magazine had featured an number of critical articles about the Vietnam War beginning as early as 1964. McCarthy's "Vietnam" series was essential in the Review's transition from a rather stuffy intellectual periodical into a chic trendsetter, and helped propel the magazine's "great literary leap leftward" in 1967.[44]

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[41] Carol Gelderman, Mary McCarthy: A Life. (New York: St. Martins Press, 1981) 278.

[42] McCarthy's "Report from Vietnam" appeared as a three-part serial in The New York Review of Books as follows: "The Home Program" 20 Apr. 1967: 5-22; "The Problems of Success" 4 May 1967: 4-9; "The Intellectuals" 18 May 1967: 21+. The concluding article in the series, "Solutions" appeared 9 Nov 1967: 3-6. McCarthy's Vietnam essay was also published subsequently in The Observer in four parts (30 Apr. 1967-30 May 1967). All three essays and "Solutions" were later published in book from under the title, Vietnam (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1967). In 1968 McCarthy published the controversial essay, Hanoi (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), a sympathetic portrayal of the North Vietnamese based on a two week tour of North Vietnam. She wrote a total of three pieces on Vietnam between 1967 and 1973. These were later published together in The Seventeenth Degree (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovitch, 1974).

[43] Philip Nobile, Intellectual Skywriting. Literary Politics and "The New York Review of Books" (New York: Charterhouse, 1974) 3.

[44] Nobile 39. "Almost every article that the Review is now famous, or notorious, for was squeezed into that twelvemonth." It includes the conclusion of McCarthy's Vietnam series, "Solutions." Also appearing that year were essays from Noam Chomsky, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals," and Paul Goodman, "The 'We Won't Go' Movement." I.F. Stone chastises anti-Vietnam advocate Senator William Fulbright , and labels him a "drowsy watchdog" and a "cloakroom crusader" who spoke up too late against the war in "Fulbright: The Timid Opposition." Another article alleges a nefarious link between the CIA and intellectuals.

From the outset, McCarthy ignores military and political issues, and instead focuses on the detrimental impact of American soldiers and civilians on the country and culture of South Vietnam. Her characterizations are illustrated by unsettling anecdotes based on her first-hand observations. In the opening paragraph she baldly states her antiwar bias, admitting she arrived in Saigon looking for "material damaging to American interests." Her prejudices are quickly validated when she sees how Americans and their war machines dominate the landscape. By day the city resembles a "gigantic PX," and a "World's Fair or Exposition in some hick American city" by night,[45] an atmosphere which McCarthy likens to a cruise ship, with a "pepless *Playboy* flavor" (MC, 6). The war seems far away, but she quickly learns that "a short trip by helicopter from Saigon in almost any direction permits a ringside view of American bombing" (MC, 31). To those who stand to profit, the war in Southeast Asia is just a "cheap form of mass tourism, [which] opens the mind to business opportunities" (MC, 23). The American presence has completely undercut the local economy, turning it into a booming service economy entirely dependent on civilian and military personnel. The inevitable American withdrawal will surely and swiftly lead to Saigon's economic collapse.

With the steady influx of foreign troops and consumer goods, Saigon has become a classic example of unbridled capitalism and opportunism at work. It has been transformed into an American city populated by an Asian minority, mirroring the best and the worst of the American dream. The similarities to home are striking. The surroundings and atmosphere in the city are that of a vacation, except for the unmistakable presence of

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[45] McCarthy 5-6. All further references to McCarthy's text will be indicated parenthetically by the abbreviation "MC".

war. The war in the countryside, where the "terrain" is cleared with "Incindergel" (i.e. napalm, "which makes it sound like Jello") and "weedkiller," (i.e. defoliant, "something you use in your driveway") is a barely visible column of smoke on the horizon (MC, 3).

McCarthy's Americans, whether found behind a desk or a gun, are "zealots" and "springy, zesty, burning-eyed warriors" (MC, 25). Typical of the military mindset, "the war is not questioned; it is just a fact. The job has to be finished" (MC, 10). The focused and disciplined soldiers she observes and interviews in the field "can become very sentimental when they think of the good they are doing and the hard row they have to hoe with the natives, who have been brainwashed by the Viet Cong" (MC, 25). They are missionaries "spreading the American way of life, a new "*propaganda fide*" (MC, 18). McCarthy's essay is populated with clueless ideologues, who speak glibly of reeducation, "pacification" and progress as defined by statistics and diagrams. Vietnam has become a laboratory for academics tinkering with their social and economic theories. She finds it difficult, if not impossible to get a straightforward answer to any of her questions except from those actually on the front lines. This warped idealism is not confined to the pencil-pushers and bean-counters in Saigon, as illustrated by numerous examples from the field.

Repeatedly McCarthy tours refugee camps housing entire villages, which have forcibly uprooted and resettled. Even the showplaces are lacking in rudimentary supplies, sanitation, clean water and decent quarters. One area, the "Iron Triangle," was razed during Operation Cedar Falls ("Clear and Destroy"). The 7,000 plus refugees (mostly women, children and old men) were allowed to bring only a few personal belongings and some animals. Despite the fact that these people have traditionally

engaged in rice cultivation, the U.S. Army has decided to turn them into vegetable farmers. Not only have they lost everything, but their water buffalo are sickening and dying in the new environment. It is apparent to her from the outset that even the most humanitarian of projects in the field are part and parcel of the military's public relations effort. The hard sell is directed not only at the American press and public, but at themselves. Propaganda is everywhere. A banner at the entrance to a refugee camp reads, in English: "REFUGEES FROM COMMUNISM." Even for those who are not refugees, but whose lives have been disrupted, life is fraught with absurdities.

For McCarthy, the true measure of the war's progress is illustrated by problems created by the Americans themselves: a flood of refugees and the nightmarish logistics of caring for them. By 1968 about ten percent of South Vietnam's population had been dislocated by the war. As McCarthy bitterly notes, these are not typical political refugees fleeing persecution from the enemy. It is the Americans who have flushed them from their homes and farms. This program of destruction and relocation was an integral part of the American "pacification" effort, which, however, created infinitely more problems than it solved. A recurring theme in the essay is the disruption of an ancient agrarian society.[46] The American's systematic uprooting of the Vietnamese population is echoed in the rural landscape which is grossly disfigured by defoliation, bombing, mounds of industrial garbage and war wreckage: ". . . the fecal matter of our civilization" (MC, 51).

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[46] This theme is also the subject of the drawings accompanying McCarthy's "Report from Vietnam" in The New York Review of Books.

The brains behind the "pacification" program are "paramilitary professors" trained at American universities, who have transformed Vietnam into a giant experiment with their "Strategic Hamlets": "Here for the first time, political science, as taught and studied in the big American universities, is being applied to war, where it often seems close to science fiction" (MC, 62). Even more dangerous than the implementation of these ill-conceived textbook programs is the constant manipulation of language, "where words, as if 'accidentally,' have broken loose from their common meanings" (MC, 86). For McCarthy, political and military codewords are euphemisms for destruction, death and misery inflicted on a helpless civilian population. The lingo is a primary instrument in obscuring the real human cost of the war. Terms such as "resettlement," "carpet bombing," "collateral damage," and even "accident" disguise an ever-widening gap between the war's humanitarian objectives and brutal actions against the Vietnamese. The complete alienation of actor from action as mirrored by language is a recurrent theme in the essay, and becomes the focal point of McCarthy's closing argument.

The conflict has assumed the guise of an archetypal struggle between good and evil, right and wrong, freedom and oppression. McCarthy's Americans, in their eagerness to play God with a Third World agrarian people, have lost their humanity. In eliminating the black-clad enemy, outgunned and technologically disadvantaged, the gap between the force necessary and force expended is immense. From the Americans' superior vantage point it is almost like a game. In one incident McCarthy relays the savage and swift retribution, like a bolt of lightning from above, against a peasant who confronts an American bomber:

> Punishment can be magisterial. A correspondent, who was tickled by the incident, described flying with the pilot of the little FAC plane that directs a big bombing mission; below, a lone Vietnamese on a bicycle stopped, looked up, dismounted, took up a rifle and fired; the pilot let him have it with a whole bombload of napalm--enough for a platoon. In such circumstances, anyone with a normal sense of fair play cannot help pulling for the bicyclist, but the sense of fair play, supposed to be Anglo-Saxon, has atrophied in the Americans here from lack of exercise. (MC, 33)

The old adage of "might makes right" has warped the rules of modern warfare, leading McCarthy to conclude that, "the worst thing that could happen to our country would be to win this war" (MC, 33). An American victory would justify a war policy she believes based on a horrific disregard for human life, and guarantee the use of such methods in future conflicts. This same quote, tellingly, becomes the essay's title in Der Spiegel.

Given the increasingly higher stakes, the perpetration of a monolithic image of the enemy becomes increasingly problematic. In the semantics of the war Viet Cong guerrillas, communist aggression and the lone bicyclist with the rifle are one with their actions. The actions Johnson and the Americans soldiers are dictated by the actions of North Vietnam. The American soldier, separated from his actions by pristine ideology, "is pictured as completely sundered from his precision weaponry, as though he had no control over it, in the same way that Johnson, escalating, feigns to have no option in the war" (MC, 86). McCarthy points out that even the ethically correct decision to not use "The Bomb" is invalidated by the refinement of other devices which are just as effective and morally reprehensible, even if the individual incidents of destruction are on a smaller scale. The defense industry is hard at work developing more

adhesive napalm, better tear gases, improved defoliants and tortuous machines for forcing the Viet Cong from their tunnels (MC, 97).

In the essay's follow-up, "Solutions," McCarthy advocates the swift and immediate withdrawal of American troops from South Vietnam, and the end of the bombings in the North. She is not interested in what is practical or expedient, but in what is moral. From her view, the issue is essentially black or white: "Either it is *morally* wrong for the United States to bomb a small and virtually defenseless country or it is not, and a student picketing the Pentagon is just as great an expert in that realm, to say the least, as Dean Rusk or Joseph Alsop" (MC, 95). The logistics and political considerations--present and future--are only a smoke-screen to hide a lack of national will.

McCarthy points out that there is no lack of "solutions" to the Vietnam War put forward by politicians. She is equally critical of them all:

> Richard Goodwin's proposal in The New Yorker, of J. K. Gilbraith's "moderate solution" (hailed by James Reston), by Senator Fulbright's eight-point program, and, sad to say, by Fulbright's hearings taken as a whole. What emerges, when all the talk is over, is that none of these people really opposes the war. Or not enough to stop thinking in terms of 'solutions,' all of which imply continuing the war by slightly different means until the Viet Cong or Hanoi . . . is ready to make peace. (MC, 90-1)

Her own approach is simplistic, and unhampered by diplomatic and political posturing. It is morally incumbent upon the U.S. to withdraw, regardless of the political loss of face at home and abroad. These intangibles are unimportant when weighed against loss of life. She is concerned only with what she perceived as sane and morally correct: "Not being a military specialist, I cannot plot the logistics of withdrawing 464,000

American boys from Vietnam, but I know that it can be done, if necessary, and Johnson knows it too. *Everybody* knows it" (MC, 95). In the spring of 1967, a successful conclusion to the war still seemed possible. But less than a year later, in the course of the Tet Offensive, it became painfully clear to the Johnson administration and the American public as a whole that the war was being lost. However, the logistics of withdrawal took an additional five costly years to accomplish.

McCarthy concludes her "Vietnam" series with a call to individual political action. Protest at all levels is needed to prod the nation from its complacency: "There are various ways of obliging the administration--and more importantly the country--to take notice: some extremely radical, like the bonze's way of self-immolation; some less so, ranging from tax refusal through the operation of underground railroads for protesting draftees, down to simple boycotts of key war industries; nobody who is against the war should be receiving dividends from the manufacture of napalm, for instance, which is calling to be outlawed" (MC, 106). McCarthy's solution to the Vietnam crisis is a grassroots movement of individual political initiative based on ethics. It is just possible that the sum total of individual acts of civil resistance at all levels "modestly or grandly, with friends or alone" will coalesce into a viable and powerful resistance movement capable of affecting political change: "From each according to his abilities, but to be in the town jail, as Thoreau knew, can relieve any sense of imaginary imprisonment" (MC, 106). As long as the administration circulates "cooked-up" solutions for others to implement "like inter-office memoranda" (MC, 106), and war resistance is confined to university campuses, the status quo will remain unchanged. In her essay series, McCarthy portrays the policies of the Johnson administration in Southeast Asia as morally

bankrupt, which must be challenged and changed by right-thinking individuals.

The opinions expressed in McCarthy's "Report from Vietnam" were in line with the attitudes of many other vocal American intellectuals. Their antiwar position, and especially demands for immediate withdrawal, while fast gaining public acceptance still remained outside the mainstream until after the Tet Offensive in the early spring 1968. Although national polls tracked the public's growing dissatisfaction with the administration's Vietnam policy, only one-third supported immediate withdrawal. In August 1967 34% of the American public supported this action, up significantly from 24% six weeks before. Almost two-thirds were against sending more troops to Southeast Asia.[47] But, in the national mind, antiwar protest remained the purview of university students and hippies. Contrary to popular perceptions, there is convincing evidence for the ineffectiveness of the antiwar movement: "Antiwar demonstrations had not convinced most citizens that the United States was morally wrong in being in Vietnam and may have even slowed the development of withdrawal sentiment by acting as a negative reference point."[48] In her essay McCarthy attacks both Johnson's reactionary policies in Vietnam, and public complacency toward them, despite the growing evidence that

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[47] "Sofort raus?" 102. The tide had begun to turn just a few weeks earlier. A Gallup poll from mid-July shows that "for the first time, a majority of Americans (52%) disapprove of President Johnson's handling of the war. The poll showed that 41% believe that the U.S. should never have sent troops to Vietnam in the first place, a percentage that has risen steadily from 24% in 1965, and that 56% think the Allies are stalemated or losing the war. Only 34% said they believe the Allies are making progress." Time, 11 Aug 1967: 11.

[48] Lunch and Sperlich 31. See also Philip E. Converse et al, "Continuity and Change in American Politics: Parties and Issues in the 1968 Election, American Political Science Review 63 (1969): 1105.

people were beginning to express opposition in the polls, especially in the matter of escalation. Still, in 1967, public debate on the Vietnam War was merely "a minority pastime, looked by the majority with more or less tolerance" (MC, 106). This public complacency is anathema to the sort of political change McCarthy sees as critical to ending the war.

In the United States, the impact of McCarthy's "Vietnam" essay was limited to the cerebral pages of The New York Review of Books. The series did provoke a reaction published in the January 18, 1968 issue. Opposing McCarthy's plea for immediate and unconditional withdrawal, Diana Trilling argues that the resulting vacuum in South Vietnam would be filled by the communists. She further warns that the massacre of countless anti-communists who had assisted the Americans would be inevitable. The magazine gave the face-off between the two top billing in bold print: "Diana Trilling vs. Mary McCarthy." Far from igniting a firestorm of public discourse, Trilling's reaction was the end of it. It was quickly apparent to McCarthy that she was preaching to the choir: "Intellectuals, who did not need awakening, seemed to be the only persons listening to her."[49] To her great surprise and disappointment, critics and readers alike ignored Vietnam and book sales were miserable:

> My publicist was absolutely thunderstruck," she disclosed on William Buckley, Jr.'s "Firing Line." "He had never seen a case of a book on a controversial subject by a well-known author--this after the success of The Group--that received virtually no notice." Buckley suggested that the reviewers ignored Vietnam because "they thought it was preposterous."[50]

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[49] Gelderman 283.

[50] Gelderman 283.

McCarthy's anti-war views, along with the concerns of other American intellectuals, most notably Noam Chomsky, were brushed aside for the time being. While the book's failure was a tremendous personal disappointment for McCarthy, it was indicative of mainstream American sentiment prior to the Spring of 1968. While the public was increasingly uncomfortable with the war and proposed escalation, polls did not reflect a significant change until later in the summer of 1967. Overwhelming public opposition to the war did not manifest itself until the Tet Offensive.

McCarthy's essay, "Report from Vietnam," appeared in a four part series in Der Spiegel the following July (nos. 29-32) under the title, "Über Amerikas Krieg in Vietnam."[51] It is something of a departure from the magazine's typical Vietnam coverage in 1967/8, the period covered in Johnson's Jahrestage. The change in the title is already indicative of the transformation the essay underwent for Der Spiegel. The magazine's publication of McCarthy's essay is notable in that it was the only feature article by an American--and one of only a handful of human interest pieces on the Asian conflict--appearing in the magazine during the late Sixties. Its publication in Der Spiegel guaranteed wide-exposure to a well-educated, but still essentially mainstream German reading public.

The German translation is by Klaus Harpprecht, also an acquaintance of Johnson. The West German news weekly was the only European periodical to carry the essay. In terms of sheer numbers the article's impact in Germany was much more significant than in the U.S. Other factors contributed to an entirely different presentation and reception of McCarthy's essay in the German press. By 1968 the Review's circulation

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[51] The Italian Magazine, Tempo Presente, also planned to publish McCarthy's essay. But the plan was derailed by scandal when CIA funds were linked to the magazine's sponsor, Congress for Cultural Freedom.

had peaked at 82,000,[52] comparable to Der Spiegel's circulation for the same period. In addition, the news magazine's reading audience was significantly different from that of the Review. It was made up of the well-educated and politically cognizant--but still essentially mainstream--middle and upper classes. Not only did the series receive significantly wider exposure, but judging from the "Leserbriefe" the response was far more positive. Although she is criticized for her "merkwürdige Vietnam-Impressionen" and as a "Vertreterin jener intellektuellen Schichten," some readers roundly condemn what they perceive as an unjust and inhumane war.[53]

Beyond the significant differences in audience and venue is the striking metamorphosis of the series itself from an essay in an intellectual leftist periodical to a feature article in a national news magazine. The most telling changes are those in format and visual presentation. The original presentation is clearly that of an essay. Similar to the book, which is devoid of illustrations, the text itself is the focus of attention. It is presented compactly in a few pages, illustrated by a limited number of pen and ink drawings, which complement rather than detract from the essay.

In Der Spiegel, McCarthy's text competes with the accompanying photos. The "Vietnam" series underwent a visual transformation in keeping with the magazine's typical format. No photos were included with the original series in The New York Review of Books or in the book version.

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[52] Nobile 65.

[53] "Nachdem die Amerikaner in Vietnam Konzentrationslager errichten und Kampagnen gegen die Senatoren Robert Kennedy, Fulbright und andere gestartet werden, die dem Wahnsinn ein Ende machen wollen, kann man die Politik deGaulles nur begrüßen. Wann wird sich die Bundesregierung endlich auch von den USA lossagen?" Spiegel 7 Aug. 1967: 10.

In the first three segments of the original article pen and ink drawings are sprinkled through the text. The concluding segment is punctuated with political cartoons, which seem only marginally related to the text. Most of photos included in Der Spiegel are dramatic in nature, with a strong human interest element. A closer examination of the interplay between photo and text in Der Spiegel reveals a subtext underscoring--and to a certain extent manipulating--some of the more radical ideas in McCarthy's article.[54] McCarthy's opening descriptions of Saigon's decadent hedonism is punctuated with pictures of American soldiers with Vietnamese go-go dancers and prostitutes. Interspersed are photos of black market goods at busy market places, billboards advertising American products and Westerners in rickshaws. One photo shows McCarthy--distinguished by grin and baseball cap--standing in front of a U.S. military aircraft "mit dem Vietnam Experten Bernard Fall." The caption is a loose paraphrase of McCarthy's motivation for the Vietnam trip as expressed in the essay's opening paragraph: "Ich wollte Amerikas Interessen schädigen." The shift in McCarthy's agenda according to the Der Spiegel as expressed by this caption is subtle, but telling.[55]

A dominant theme in the photos, as in the essay itself, is the dislocation of the Vietnamese population. Included are families huddled with their meager belongings in helicopters and unkept, disoriented children being unloaded from a military transport truck. But this "Evakuierung" also has a distinctly dark side apart from the content of the

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[54] The interplay between text and photo in the news media was a special interest to Johnson. His treatment and thematization of this dynamic in Jahrestage is discussed further in Ch. 6.

[55] "Über Amerikas Krieg in Vietnam," Spiegel 10 Jul. 1967: 81. Compare this to McCarthy's original statement, where admittedly she arrives looking for "material damaging to American interests." (MC, 6)

images themselves. For example, there is a photo of a refugee camp gate, similar to the one described in the essay (MC, 28) sans banner. The image itself is not particularly disturbing, but the caption is: "Evakuierten-Camp in Dak To: Letzte Zuflucht im Konzentrationslager?"[56] The cynicism of such a reference, further punctuated by a question mark, could hardly be lost on the German reading public. As described above, McCarthy points to the absurdity of distinguishing between accidental and deliberate civilian casualties and determining if and when such actions becomes genocidal. But never are the compounds referred to as anything but refugee or resettlement camps. The historically loaded term, "concentration camp," appears nowhere in the original essay. It can only be assumed that Der Spiegel's use of the term is deliberate and meant to be provocative.

In a much more damning example of the Americans' destructive domination, the series concludes with two contrasting pictures of bombed-out structures. The caption reads: "Wenn Amerikaner das gleiche tun . . . ist es etwas anderes." While the subject matter of the two photos is ostensibly similar, the emotional impact is far from equal. Both are images of destruction caused by war. The arrangement of the two pictures follows a pattern consistent throughout the series of pairing photos illustrating similar subjects in North and South Vietnam.

On the concluding pages of the series, the first picture is reminiscent of a dramatic tableau. It shows the blackened shell of a North Vietnamese kindergarten. An adult and three children stand tightly clustered before the blackened ruin. Their attention is clearly riveted by the sight. The image addresses several of McCarthy's themes: civilian targets and casualties as well as the official denial of their existence, forceful

[56] Spiegel 17 Jul. 1967: 91.

resettlement and the reeducation process. The schoolhouse motif is an important one within the text itself, illustrating American willingness to deny or refashion reality to fit their scenarios and stereotypes.[57]

The second photo is more pedestrian in content and composition. It shows a bombed out housing block in Saigon. Here, the subjects are all adults, some of whom are clearly Caucasian. A group of soldiers stands off to the far right. One man--perhaps a reporter--is taking notes. In comparison to the first photo this scene is devoid of emotion. The reader observes other official observers viewing a destroyed building. No one seems surprised or particularly upset. Other than the reporter, no one seems to be much paying attention to the bombed out background.

The paraphrased caption comprises yet another aspect of the Der Spiegel article's subtext. The use of "wenn" implies frequent American bombing attacks on North Vietnamese civilians, as well as raising the implication of deliberate action. In the text itself McCarthy is not prepared to go that far. Public reaction to the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam at this point was mixed. Johnson and his supporters considered strategic bombing of military targets essential in forcing Hanoi to the negotiating table. McCarthy merely points to the ludicrous paradox perpetrated by the military. At the same time they profess to make a theoretical, humanistic distinction between combatants and non-combatants, but does not separate them in actual practice on the battlefield.

Although Mary McCarthy is not mentioned specifically in Jahrestage, Johnson was almost certainly aware of the McCarthy essays, if

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[57] The second part of the series, "The Home Program," includes lengthy passages ridiculing the empty "cream schoolhouse . . . essential to the American dream of what we are doing in Vietnam" and the belief that "in Viet Cong hamlets no schooling is permitted" (MC, 31).

not from New York Review of Books then from Der Spiegel. Johnson was also personally acquainted with McCarthy through their mutual friend, Hannah Arendt while living in New York in 1966.[58] His personal library contained American editions of most of McCarthy's fiction, although it includes neither of her "Vietnam" essays.

In the context of Johnson's Jahrestage, McCarthy's essay, "Report from Vietnam," is a useful benchmark in several ways. McCarthy expresses the dissenting views of American intellectuals based on moral and human rights issues. The intellectual's position in 1967 emphasized the loss of life, human rights abuses, destruction of the Vietnamese culture, and the possibility of escalation into global nuclear engagement. The discussion avoided the political and military considerations cited by the Johnson administration, which intellectuals such as McCarthy deemed immaterial. At the same time the book's lackluster sales in the U.S. clearly delineates the gap between intellectual and mainstream/Main Street America's positions on the war. Despite the public's increasing frustration with the war, which increased markedly in 1967 and early 1968, the majority of Americans were still solidly behind the Johnson administration. Lastly, there is the differences in the essay's American and German versions. Although the series was published roughly concurrently in the U.S. and the BRD, it appeared in two vastly different venues in terms of both circulation and reading audience. The essay's American audience exhibited primarily leftist political leanings and was

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58 Arendt also lived on Riverside Drive and was among one of the first people Johnson met in New York. She figures in Jahrestage as "Gräfin Seydlitz." While visiting the U.S. in spring 1965 Johnson was interviewed by McCarthy's German translator, Klaus Harpprecht, who was then working as a press correspondent in Washington D.C. So aside from Johnson's own preoccupation with the Vietnam issue, there are several other avenues of contact. Bernd Neumann, Uwe Johnson. Mit zwölf Porträts von Dieter Ritzert (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1994) 544.

well-educated. The public at large was distinctly uninterested in McCarthy's anti-war views, as reflected by low sales of the essay in book form. On the other side of the Atlantic, publication in Der Spiegel guaranteed McCarthy's series high volume mainstream exposure. The McCarthy series fit in quite well with magazine's circumscribed coverage of the United States in the late 1960s. With few exceptions, reports deal almost exclusively with President Johnson and the Vietnam War. The articles on Johnson are actually an extension of the Vietnam topic, as many address his plummeting popularity, increased isolation, and reelection outlook, all of which are tied directly to his failed war policy. The publication and reception of McCarthy's controversial essay in Germany's largest news weekly highlights fundamental differences between national attitudes on the Vietnam war. In 1967, the antiwar movement had not yet caught on the U.S., whereas in Germany these views were already part of the public forum.

CHAPTER 4
"DAS BEWUSSTSEIN DES TAGES": GESINE AND THE NEW YORK TIMES

The year 1967/8, chronicled in Uwe Johnson's Jahrestage, is among the most turbulent in American history. The nation was in a state of social and political crisis. The tide of public opinion was slowly turning against the Johnson administrations policy in Southeast Asia. Frustration with the Vietnam conflict escalated even further in late 1967 as the number of American troops was increased to half a million with no military or political resolution in sight. Every month the bill for American involvement in Vietnam was over a billion dollars.[1] The sharp increase in American involvement in Vietnam was to be funded by monies funneled from much needed social programs.

By the late 1960s the nation was taking notice of the counter-culture and its message. Privileged children of the American middle-class were in revolt against their authoritarian parents, and by extension, the government. The War Against Poverty declared by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964, which championed job training and improved housing for the underprivileged, had done little to alleviate the plight of the inner city poor. Unemployment and substance abuse were epidemic in the ghettos. More than thirty people died when racial tensions erupted violently in the Watts ghetto near Los Angeles. The American public was as shocked by

[1] Lunch and Sperlich 30.

the sight of brutal confrontations between black rioters and white police officers as they were by burned out neighborhoods. A substantial increase in the numbers of robberies, assaults, and violent deaths in urban America seemed to further confirm the perceived downhill slide of American cities. Civil Rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King preached non-violent protest to followers seeking racial equality and harmony. Democratic Presidential candidate and brother of a martyred president Robert Kennedy criticized Johnson's bankrupt Vietnam policy and promised a "new America." The assassinations of these two young national political figures in 1968 rocked the nation--and the world. Lyndon B. Johnson's "Great Society" appeared to be self-destructing. These political developments, which Gesine culls daily from the pages of The New York Times, form the backbone of Jahrestage.

Throughout the early part of the Jerichow narrative Gesine relies upon documentary materials to reconstruct a remote, and ultimately unknowable, past. In the contemporary narrative Gesine continues to use similar items to substantiate her observations and experiences in New York City during the late 1960s. On both levels the articles provide the impetus for reflection as well. For this second narrative strand Gesine's preferred source of information is The New York Times, "die sich selbst als Gewissen der Welt versteht."[2] The items gleaned from its pages are part and parcel of Jahrestage's diary-structure. Documentary materials relay events which lay outside the realm of Gesine's immediate experience. Still, these events have a significant impact on her life. Reports from the battlefields of Vietnam, incidents of social injustice and racial unrest across America, ongoing reports on war crimes trials in West Germany

[2] "New York Times: Brunnen der Geschichte," Spiegel 13 May 1968: 140.

and the evolving reform process in Czechoslovakia are all topics which have a marked effect on Gesine's everyday existence.

By placing Gesine in a specific temporal and historical context, The New York Times functions in the novel as her window on the world. The New York environment is one in which she is clearly an outsider. From the outset it is clear that her personal history sets her apart from other people with whom she comes into contact. Her isolation from mainstream American society is further compounded by her responsibilities as a single parent, her circle of acquaintances, and her job. She is a woman with little leisure time. When she is free, she invariably has a newspaper in her hand. With few exceptions, her acquaintances are other Europeans or people from work. Few of the relationships can be characterized as friendships. Even her fiancé, D.E., is kept at arm's length.

When compared with Johnson's other novels, the structure of Jahrestage seems uncharacteristically simple. To the consternation of literary critics Johnson declined throughout his career to identify any fixed set of principles in his writings. However, a consistent theme in interviews is the premise that form emerges from the demands of the material itself. According to Johnson, content and form comprise a single entity:

> Die Geschichte muß sich die Form auf den Leib gezogen haben. Die Form hat lediglich die Aufgabe, die Geschichte unbeschädigt zur Welt zu bringen. Sie darf vom Inhalt nicht mehr ablösbar sein.[3]

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[3] Johnson, "Vorschläge zur Prüfung eines Romans" 34. He states elsewhere: "Ich habe nämlich in keinem Fall versucht, mit Schwierigkeiten anzugeben, zu zeigen, wie kompliziert und verwickelt man es machen kann, ich habe in jedem Fall die gewählte Form und Struktur der Erzählung für die einzig mögliche gehalten." Reinhard Baumgart, "Uwe Johnson im Gespräch," "Ich überlege mir die Geschichte . . ." 226.

He argues that each project presents a unique set of problems, the consideration of which dictates a particular structural and narrative form. The two elements are likewise considered inseparable in the creative process:

> Was meine Mittel oder Erzählweise angeht, so habe ich da keine Experimente gemacht. Ich habe gewartet, bis ich für die Geschichte, die mir bekannt war und die ich erzählen wollte, die Form wußte und hatte, die ich brauchte.[4]

For Jahrestage this results in the incorporation of the reconstructive narrative into the novel's chronologically narrated New York strand. Just looking at the format, the novel appears at first glance to be a journal. It is, in fact, the text of a narrative project in which Gesine collaborates with her narrative partner, Johnson, to reconstruct her childhood. The calendar starts running on August 21, 1967 as Gesine returns to work after a vacation at the shore. The deal struck between Gesine and her narrative partner is limited to one year, which at times she finds too taxing:

> . . . seit bald einem Jahr die Tage, die der Genosse Schriftsteller aufschreiben will. Wie werden wir froh sein, wenn es ein Ende hat mit dem Unveröffentlichten. (IV, 1657)

The calendar, much like a daily log-book, includes an accounting of Gesine's present day experiences, the remembrance process, and documents the progress of the project.

In earlier works such as Mutmaßungen über Jakob and Das dritte Buch über Achim the narrator/s attempt to reconstruct the story of an individual. Pertinent information is culled from a variety of sources, and relayed to the reader from multiple perspectives. In both novels, however,

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[4] Bienek 89.

the subject's story remains incomplete. Both are characteristically reticent to reveal much of their inner selves. Jakob's death neatly precludes him from any direct narrative probing. Achim ultimately breaks off contact with his biographer, Karsch. He assumes his fabricated public image of sport celebrity and folk hero, which has become more real to him than his own personal history. A definitive portrayal of Jakob or Achim proves impossible despite an exhaustive review of available information. For the narrator both subjects remain inaccessible either through an act of fate or of the will.

Conversely, in Jahrestage Johnson probes the life and history of a single subject, who cooperates fully with her narrative partner within defined parameters. An entire historical epoch is viewed from the perspective of one individual. Unlike the two earlier novels, narrator and reader are privy not only to the same materials available to Gesine, but also to her memories and the reconstructive process itself. The change in narrative focus is reflected in the novel's structure. Bernd Neumann was one of several critics who were disappointed by Jahrestage's "durchaus traditionelle Erzählstruktur und -haltung."[5] Johnson however, views the novel's structure as perfectly consistent with that of his earlier works. By using the calendar year to break down Gesine's story into self-sufficient, yet interrelated, daily segments, Johnson provides a simple, unvarying structural solution for a set of very complex narrative and thematic demands. Guided by the rigid chronological sequence of the calendar year Gesine can address the past in a structured and organized fashion.

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[5] Bernd Neumann, Utopie und Memesis: Zum Verhältnis von Ästhetik, Gesellschaftsphilosophie und Politik in den Romanen Uwe Johnsons (Kronberg/Ts.: Athenaum, 1978) 305.

Current events cited daily from The New York Times further enforce the novel's calendar structure. Existing parallel to the historical narrative are segments Gesine dictates into tape recorder at Marie's behest "für wenn ich tot bin" (I, 386). By contrast, when Gesine begins to record her thoughts and memories on tape she steps outside the novel's regulative structure. The direct confrontation with herself and her past, without the intervening presence of her narrative partner is initially overwhelming. She confides to the tape recorder:

> Manchmal bin ich so müde, daß ich genauso unordentlich
> rede wie ich denke
> Ich finde das nicht ordentlich wie ich denke
> Wo ich her bin das gibt es nicht mehr. (I, 386)

The grafting of the reconstructive narrative onto the novel's dominant structural component--the calendar--is consistent with Johnson's premise that form emerges organically from the demands of the material.[6] In his Frankfurt lecture series he describes how the idea for Jahrestage's structure developed:

> [Die Blätter] waren entstanden aus der Übung, für jedes der vorgegebenen 365 oder 366 Kapiteln einen unabhängigen Ansatz, eine eigene Struktur herzustellen, die jeweils zu entwickeln waren auch aus dem Zustand des erzählenden Subjekts. War dieser Versuch einmal gesichert, konnte der Rest der Zeit verwandt werden auf

[6] Critics such as Marcel Reich-Ranicki found Johnson's depiction of the interrelationship between form and content pretentious: "Für jede Geschichte, sagte er [Johnson] einmal, suchte er die passende Form. Hier hingegen sucht er nicht für eine Geschichte die Form, sondern für einen Stoff die Geschichte--und er findet sie nicht, jedenfalls nicht auf diesen fast fünfhundert Seiten" (Reich-Ranicki, Entgegnungen. Zur deutschen Literatur des siebziger Jahre. Stuttgart: Deutsche-Verlags Anstalt, 1979, 252). His assessment of Jahrestage I proved to be somewhat premature. He later backtracked significantly after Johnson's death soon after the publication Vol. IV: ". . . sicher ist, daß noch nie ein deutscher Erzähler die Verhältnisse in den ersten Jahren nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg auf dem Gebiet der künftigen DDR so anschaulich und so wahr beschrieben hat. . . . Zu Recht wurde gesagt, daß die Jahrestage im vierten Band zu einem epischen Kunstwerk werden, das zugleich ein Werk der Geschichtsschreibung ist" (Marcel Reich-Ranicki, "Der trotzige Einzelgänger. Zum Tode des einsamen Schriftstellers Uwe Johnson," Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 14 Mar. 1984).

> Aufmerksamkeit für die Wirklichkeit der Tage auf den Straßen von New York, wie sie sich gibt außerhalb der New York Times und wie sie hätte verloren gehen können für den, der in einem Büro davon abgeschlossen ist beim Schreiben eines Kapitels für einen anderen Tag. Die amerikanische Ebene des Buchs war in der Planung fertig.[7]

The narrative's calendar component is a device by which Gesine can order and catalog daily experiences in order to create an illusion of control. It also enables her to examine past events within clearly defined parameters. The illusion of ordered daily life regulated by the narrative's calendar structure is a shield against the chaotic past. Its linear and temporal aspects lend direction and dimension to the fluid tangle of Gesine's memory.

The novel's calendar structure which drives the New York narrative consists of a series of essentially diary-like entries, which one critic has labeled a "relentless method"[8] of rigid chronological order. In fact, this inherently flexible combination of calendar and journal allows for accounts of Gesine's daily routine, her impressions of urban life, and the newspaper articles which catch her eye to exist along side her historical narrative.

As a practical matter, Jahrestage's narrative calendar reflects the contractual agreement between Gesine and her narrative partner in which "ein Schreiber in ihrem Auftrag für jeden Tag eine Eintragung an ihrer Statt, mit ihrer Erlaubnis, nicht jedoch für den täglichen Tag [macht]" (IV, 1474). The text is a result of their combined efforts. The novel's chronological structure, while not strictly a diary, is echoed in Gesine's

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[7] Johnson, Begleitumstände 427.

[8] Theodore Ziolkowski, "Living with Germany on Riverside Drive." New York Times 8 Nov. 1987: 61.

description of The New York Times as "das Tagebuch der Welt" (III, 1191). Just as the novel's calendar brings a semblance of order to Gesine's present and past experience, the paper daily condenses the glut of world news into a manageable form. As Fickert points out, the calendar is more historical than personal.[9] Except for a few holidays, the calendar usually marks anniversaries of milestone events in Gesine's life. Similarly, the New York Times items related in Jahrestage reflect Gesine's personal history and agenda. The novel's almost exclusively historical-political focus is clearly established by structure as well as content.

In the Jerichow story some of these milestones are represented by her father's inexplicable return to Nazi Germany, *Reichskristallnacht* and her mother's subsequent suicide, the war, the Russian Occupation, her father's incarceration and the founding of the DDR. Milestones in the New York story are also almost all political in nature, and as in the past, are often violent: the Vietnam War (especially the Khe Sanh Siege and the Tet Offensive), the march on Washington, D.C., racial riots, the Prague Spring, ongoing Nazi war trials, as well as the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King and Sen. Robert Kennedy.

The calendar of daily life recounted in the New York narrative exists in tangent with a second narrative strand recounting Gesine's recuperation of historical memory. The Jerichow story is a retrospective account of her experiences under four distinctive political regimes. It is by comparison more loosely structured and less ordered, although it proceeds more or less chronologically. The associative connections between past and present made by Gesine are a part of the text. The weather, newspaper

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[9] Kurt Fickert, Dialogue with the Reader: The Narrative Stance in Uwe Johnson's Fiction (Columbia: Camden House, 1995) 90.

items, sounds, smells, or random phrases are among the random transition elements between the two separate narrative strands. In this respect the narrative process mimics that of memory, which is by nature associative rather than chronological. According to Johnson:

> Wir benutzen in unserem Denken die zeitliche Folge, aber auch andere Methoden. Warum sollen wir nicht als Kompliment ansehen, daß Romane unserer Zeit wenigstens sich versuchen an den artistischen Fertigkeiten zeitgenössischer Gehirne?[10]

In Jahrestage, as in real life, there is rarely a direct correlation between the stimulus and the memory it triggers. Transitions are indicated in the text by a physical break, where sentences pick up or leave off in mid-thought. By shaping Gesine's narrative to mirror cognitive thought processes, Johnson enhances the objective credibility of the information she relays:

> Die Basis ist das Bewußtsein dieser Person, das dieses alles enthält, nebeneinander und nicht sehr streng geordnet. Was die Vergangenheit angeht, ist die Chronologie einigermaßen eingehalten, besonders auf Bitten des Kindes Marie.[11]

In most instances the transitional links between the two narrative spheres are arbitrary. They are thematically evocative rather than blatantly correlative. This interpretation, borne out both by Johnson's statements and in the text itself, further contradicts Roberta Hye's contention that Johnson draws intentional correspondences between past and present events.

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[10] Johnson, "Vorschläge zur Prüfung eines Romans" 34.

[11] Zimmer 101.

Gesine is aware that memory alone does not give a trustworthy account of the past. Remembered events are at best a composite of impressions, characterized by compression and inconsistency. Her historical-political consciousness is formed by key experiences and events, whose interpretation in limited context of her personal history is highly subjective:

> Und ich trau dem nicht was ich weiß, weil es sich nicht immer in meinem Gedächtnis gezeigt hat, dann unverhofft als Einfall auftritt. Vielleicht macht das Gedächtnis aus sich so einen Satz, den Jakob gesagt hat oder vielleicht gesagt hat, gesagt haben kann. Ist der Satz einmal fertig und vorhanden, baut das Gedächtnis die anderen um ihn herum, sogar die Stimmen von ganz anderen Leuten. Davor habe ich Angst. Mit einem Mal führe ich in Gedanken ein Gespräch über ein Gespräch, bei dem ich gar nicht dabei war und Wahrheit ist daran nur die Erinnerung an seine Intonation, wie Jakob sprach. (1, 387)

Associations may also be deliberately programmed to create the requisite memory, or a *verfälschte Vergangenheit*. A study on memory reported in The New York Times addresses some of Gesine's concerns. Its conclusions are substantiated by her own experience. Her recuperation of historical memory, in the form of her personal story, is both an affirmation and a rejection of the process as an objective tool with which to evaluate human agency:

> Wenn man aber die eigene Vergangenheit, die verfälschte Vergangenheit aufklären will, dann muß man sich kümmern um die Umstände des Jahres 1933, in dem sie geboren ist. Danach sucht sie, danach habe ich auch in ihrem Auftrag geforscht und es nach Beratung mit ihr so aufgeschrieben, wie es tatsächlich gewesen ist und nicht, wie die fälschende Erinnerung es will.[12]

[12] Becker, Michaelis and Vormweg 305.

The presence of her narrative partner, along with Marie's questions and reluctance to accept Gesine's version of past events as a *fait accompli*, are corrective devices against memory's natural tendencies.

Gesine's reconstruction of the Cresspahl family history assumes a more cohesive form through Marie's guiding questions about their actions in different political circumstances. Her daughter's questions, as well as New York Times articles, often function as a direct bridge between the Jerichow and New York strands. Regardless of the transition device employed, narrative shifts are often abrupt and inexplicable. The associative transitions, along with the italicized passages, present a deliberate contrast to the chronological organization and to the New York calendar.

A shift in narrative used in the novel's first dated entry provides a model for subsequent transitions between past and present. The bond between the two strands is introduced in truncated form:

> Das Motorengeräusch läuft ineinander in der Entfernung und schlägt in ebenmäßigen Wellen ins Fenster, Meeresbrandung vergleichbar. Von Jerichow zum Strand war es eine Stunde zu gehen, am Bruch entlang und dann zwischen den Feldern. (I, 13)

The narrative shift, which is more lyrical than most, proves a dead end. The chapter breaks off abruptly at this point. This particular passage is relayed from the viewpoint of the narrator, rather than that of Gesine. His presence is indicated by the reiterated motif, "Ich stelle mir vor" (I, 12). As he visualizes her heading for her apartment at dusk, he describes Gesine as the intellectual and physical embodiment of the interrelationship of past and present. Without her cooperation he can proceed no further. The path to Jerichow and the past leads directly through her.

The next shift between the New York and Jerichow narratives comes two days later, on August 23:

> In der Nacht in New Haven gingen fünfhundert Polizisten Patrouille in den Negervierteln. . . . Sie stellt sich vor, daß sie die Gesichter der Polizisten beobachtet hätte, deren eines zu sehen ist unter der erhobenen schwarzen Faust in der Zeitung, mit einem ungläubigen Ausdruck fast altersweiser Art, noch im Nachgeschmack der vorangegangenen Prügelei.
> Im August 1933 saß Cresspahl in einem schattigen Garten an der Travemündung, mit dem Rücken zur Ostsee, und las in einer englischen Zeitung, die fünf Tage alt war.
> (I, 16)

Although the interior monologue is relayed by the narrator in the third person, the viewpoint is here clearly Gesine's. This is indicated by a new formulation of the previous motif: "sie stellt sich vor." The only apparent link between present and past narratives is that both Gesine and her father are reading the newspaper. Significantly, her first image is one of her father engrossed in a newspaper. This link between two generations proves of critical relevance to the story. Both are portrayed as dedicated newspaper readers. Heinrich Cresspahl's paper is almost a week old. Gesine patiently wades through stacks of back issues of The New York Times which accumulated during her vacation. Should she miss one, she doesn't hesitate to pick up a discarded copy in the subway or from the trash can (I, 15). Both she and her father turn to papers in another language for news. The link between the British newspaper, The Times, and The New York Times is an important one for Gesine, who also has access to Der Spiegel and presumably to other German news sources in a large metropolis like New York. Her paper of choice represents both practical and personal concerns. Though the papers have little in common aside

from their names and respectable reputations, this is enough to earn Gesine's dogged devotion.

A third narrative strand, which plays off materials in both the Jerichow and New York stories, relates a series of imagined dialogs. Frequently Gesine's dialog partners are ghosts from her past. Other passages are narrated by a collective voice, described by Peter Pokay as the "Chor der Jerichower Kleinbürger."[13] These exchanges are set off from the main body of the text, and are printed in italics. Many passages consist simply of vague fragments or comments, rather than lengthy exchanges. The identity of her dialog partner is rarely given, and cannot always be immediately established. In some instances it is impossible to identify them with certainty even in hindsight.

The third narrative stance differs from the Jerichow and New York stories in two significant aspects. The two primary story lines deal primarily with actual historical events. In the italicized passages it is often unclear if they are manifestations of memory or fantasy. They are also conveyed entirely from Gesine's perspective without editorial interference from "Genosse Schriftsteller." In the absence of her narrative partner Gesine functions autonomously. Her narrative collaborator simply recounts the material as dictated. The subjective, spontaneous nature of the italicized passages offers a glimpse into her inner workings, which are otherwise off limits to the narrator. The fragmentary third strand mirrors her own informing presence in the text. Here she emerges "nicht als eine beschriebene Identität, sondern in zahlreichen Fetzen inneren Monologs oder Passagen erlebter Rede."[14] These passages exist independent of

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[13] Peter Pokay, "Die Erzählsituation der 'Jahrestage.'" Johnsons "Jahrestage" 284.

[14] Hoesterey 13.

temporal reality. At the same time the exchanges are inextricably bound both to the historical past and Gesine's concerns for the future. This third narrative strand, which straddles both past and present temporal levels, exists independent of the Jerichow and New York narratives' relentless linear progression which drives the novel's calendar structure.

The italicized fragments comprise the only unadulterated source of information from Gesine. By contrast, a clear physical picture of Gesine never emerges in the text, in contrast to the attentive word-paintings of New York urban life, the factual reality represented by The New York Times or the abundance of minute details embellishing her Jerichow memories. This is markedly similar to her earlier portrayal in Mutmaßungen über Jakob. Jakob Abs, Heinrich Cresspahl, and, to a lesser extent, Jöche and Rohlfs are depicted in terms of distinct physical characteristics in keeping with their personalities. The only description of Gesine is included as part of her Stasi file. The information proves all but useless to Rohlfs, who narrates the passage:

> Also Gesine Lisbeth. Und was soll ich mit Grösse: mittelgross. Damals. Vor fünf Jahren. Augenfarbe: grau. Das kann nun auch grün sein, auf der Meldestelle ist es so dämmrig dass da jeder dunkelgraue Augen hat: und was haben sie für Haarfarbe aufgeschrieben? dunkel. Datum der Geburt, staatliche Zugehörigkeit, besondere Kennzeichen: keine. Ich weiss auch nicht wie es besser wäre, aber damit kann keiner was anfangen. . . .
> Das Gesicht sehr achtzehnjährig Haarfarbe dunkel vielleicht nicht ganz schwarz straff rückwärts die Haut fest sonnenbraun über den starken Backenknochen gleichmütig ernsthaft querköpfig blickende Augen, Augenfarbe: grau.[15]

He is forced to gloss over contradictions and gaps in his information in order to arrive at a physical description of Gesine, which effectively

[15] Johnson, Mutmaßungen über Jakob 14.

neutralizes the value of his observations. Further neither physical nor biographical facts provide any insight into Gesine's psyche. In the novel even physically observable information is rendered questionable early on. The most accurate description of both Gesine and her role in the novel is a purely subjective remark by Rohlfs, who calls her the "Taube auf dem Dach."[16]

As in the case of Jakob, an incomplete and imperfect version of Gesine emerges as a result of the collaborative process between the narrators and their material. As new information continues to surface they must reevaluate their perceptions. The cycle of negotiated perception forms the backbone of memory, and ultimately of the novel itself:

> Was bleibt von einem toten Menschen übrig im Gedächtnis seiner Freunde oder seiner Feinde oder seiner Geliebten? . . . natürlich, die erinnern sich an ihn. Widersprüchlich, einer weiß mehr als der andere, sie streiten sich mitunter, wenn nicht immer, sie erinnern sich. Das wäre der Monolog. Sie reden über ihn und versuchen, ihre Meinung gegen andere durchzusetzen: das wäre Dialog. Und dann ist der Erzähler berechtigt, das hinzuzutun, was er auch noch weiß.[17]

The novel's multi-level, shifting narrative perspective is yet another variation on Johnson's approach in which content determines structure "in Stößen, Wellen und Fragmenten, in Erinnerungsschüben, Monologen und Gesprächfetzen, im Allgemeingewoge des Existentiellen ebenso wie exakt faßbaren Daten."[18] Instead of narrative being subservient to the novel's

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[16] Johnson, Mutmaßungen über Jakob 10.

[17] Bienek 114-115.

[18] Günter Blöcker, "Roman der beiden Deutschland," Über Uwe Johnson, ed. Reinhard Baumgart (Frankfurt a.M. Suhrkamp, 1970) 11.

linear and chronological form, it begins itself to determine the forward progression of the narrative.

Jahrestage offers fewer discernible narrative angles, but the difficulties of perception and narration remain, as revealed in a scene similar to the one discussed above. The only marginally physical description of Gesine appears at the beginning of Jahrestage. This is striking in a text otherwise distinguished by an obsession with detail. The scene is dominated by what is physically definable. But even in this brief passage the picture becomes fragmentary once the narrator turns from her surroundings and mannerisms to the subject herself. The phrase, "Ich stelle mir vor," injected periodically by the narrator, emphasizes the narrator's uncertainty as he turns from factual to subjective (even fictional) content:

> Sie ist jetzt vierunddreißig Jahre. Ihr Kind ist fast zehn Jahre alt. Sie lebt seit sechs Jahren in New York. In dieser Bank arbeitet sie seit 1964.
> Ich stelle mir vor: Unter ihren Augen die winzigen Kerben waren heller als die gebräunte Gesichtshaut. Ihre fast schwarzen Haare, rundum kurz geschnitten, sind bleicher geworden. Sie sah verschlafen aus, sie hat seit langem mit Niemandem groß gesprochen. Sie nahm die Sonnenbrille erst ab hinter dem aufblitzenden Türflügel. Sie trägt die Sonnenbrille nie in die Haare geschoben. (I, 12)

Here, as in Mutmaßungen über Jakob, this portrayal of Gesine reveals little relevant information. Of greater relevance to the novel is the way Gesine's identity is defined by a web of external relationships with her child, her deceased father, her high-powered boss, her narrative partner and to the newsmakers at The New York Times.

In contrast to the reality chronicled in The New York Times and the events recounted in the Jerichow story, Gesine's New York existence is

uneventful if not mundane. The counterpuntal tension between past and present commutes the novel's lack of discernible plot. The cumulative effects of sculpting political and historical forces emerge very slowly in this narrative strand. The historical narrative and the newspaper serve as both source and measuring stick for the world events which unremittingly affect Gesine's daily existence. Thus, the dynamic properties of all three modes of time and their interrelationship are portrayed through her unique consciousness.

The novel's narrative structure is reflected in the title: Jahrestage. Aus dem Leben von Gesine Cresspahl. Its English translation, "Anniversaries," is by contrast decidedly lacking. The reference is limited to the recurrent relationship between the past and the present. Continuity is preserved through memory and commemoration, illustrated in the past and present narrative. But the more fitting translation in terms of the novel is "days of the year."[19] Here, each day represents both another notch along the historical compendium, and a segment of a perpetually recurring cycle. The cyclical implication, which plays a major role in the novel, is entirely lacking in the English edition. As Johnson explains, the title communicates "that every present day keeps, by way of memory, days of one day in the past; in this sense the 365 days in the book are a technicality."[20]

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[19] This is the title preferred by Leila Vennewitz, who translated Jahrestage into English. Vennewitz explains that "Anniversaries" captures only one limited aspect of Johnson's original title, lacking "a sense of the passage, or flux, of time" implied in the other title. Johnson, however, disagreed for a number of reasons: "As to me, I thought of this book always with the Englisb 'Anniversaries' and never doubted this would be its name in an Englisb translation. . . . I would find 'Days of One Year' more bearable. It is still your suggestion, only more radical. But it removes from sight all the drawers below the single one marked 1967/68." "Auskünfte für eine Übersetzerin," "Ich überlege mir die Geschichte . . ." 325-6.

[20] "Auskünfte für eine Übersetzerin" 325.

Gesine herself reflects both the linear and cyclical aspects of the calendar as used in Jahrestage. The chronological line linking past, present and future is echoed in the system of connecting points which delineate Gesine's unvarying daily and weekly routine: Riverside Drive in Manhattan to the bank at Lexington and Third via Grand Central Station and the South Ferry. The world itself is made to fit into lines and columns in the numbered pages of The New York Times. She is also engaged in the same weary repetition of history as she repeatedly flees as a reaction to political disillusionment, which has propelled her on an involuntary journey from East to West Germany, then to America and which will ultimately bring her to Prague. The United States is yet another station in Gesine's flight from political reality. As the novel moves relentlessly forward in terms of the calendar year it also systematically reaches back into the past.

Although the outer narrative framework is essentially diary-like in character, the narrative voice is for the most part that of a third person, and not a first person narrator. Gesine's perceptions, thoughts, and reflections on the past are continually negotiated by this outer narrative voice: "Erzählt wird also nicht *das* Leben der Gesine Cresspahl, sondern *aus* ihrem Leben, und es wird, was sie erinnert, auch *von ihr* erzählt: Auch diese Lesart läßt der Untertitel zu."[21] This narrative structure, which allows for multiple narrative strands, makes possible the incorporation of material which Gesine could not simply carry around in her head: verbatim citations of The New York Times, old weather reports, lists from school and prison records, shopping lists, as well as eyewitness accounts of

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[21] Bengel, Michael. "Johnsons 'Jahrestage' und einige ihrer Voraussetzungen," Johnsons "Jahrestage" 316.

events occurring before she was born. She has substantial help with "der ungeheuren Akribie Ihrer Rekonstruktion von Wirklichkeit"[22]

Gesine is able to recall and recreate scenes from her Mecklenburg childhood with such exacting attention to detail that her recollections assume compelling factual credibility. The implied objective role of the *Verfasser* augments the veracity of the material. He does the background research, gathers reports, statistics and other materials which are used to authenticate Gesine's reconstructions:

> Sie schreibt das Buch ja nicht. Das Buch schreibt der Verfasser. Er versucht sozusagen ihr Bewußtsein des Tages darzustellen. Ob das nun ein Vorfall in New York ist oder die Suche nach Erklärungen für Vorfälle im Jahre 1938--man kann dieses im Bewußtsein bewegen und prüfen und nebenher sehr wohl die tägliche Arbeit tun. Zu diesen im Bewußtsein bewegten Sachen gehören sicher auch die Nachrichten der "New York Times," die für diese Person ja eine Vermittlung mit der Welt bedeuten, da sie den größeren Teil des wachen Tages in Arbeit abwesend ist und nur so erfahren kann, was nebenan passiert, ob das Nebenan nun die 98. Straße ist oder Südostasien. Auch die Recherchen unternimmt nicht sie, die unternimmt der Verfasser für sie. Er kann ihr dann eine Version anbieten, er kann sehen, ob es zu ihrer Biographie, zu ihren Haltungen, zu ihren Bedürfnissen paßt. Wenn es paßt, kann er weiterschreiben.[23]

The narrator's role in Jahrestage is clearly substantial, although for the most part behind the scenes. Johnson's characterization here of the relationship between Gesine and her narrative collaborator, "Genosse Schriftsteller" refutes the long-held assumption that Gesine is the single source of the New York Times items. Johnson's own position is rather

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[22] Zimmer 102.

[23] Zimmer 99-100.

obtuse as he describes the articles elsewhere as subjective segments read "mit Mrs. Cresspahls Augen."[24]

In his early essay, "Berliner Stadtbahn," Johnson poses the question: "Wo steht der Author in seinem Text?" This same concern is a central structural component of Jahrestage. In one of the novel's pivotal scenes Johnson himself puts in an appearance. The result is the agreement between Gesine and an authorial narrative persona (in the guise of a somewhat fictionalized Johnson) to reconstruct her childhood.[25] The author is identified within the text as a partner in the narrative process. He has almost unlimited access to her past and her current life, but is limited to what she chooses to share with him. She addresses him only as "Genosse Schriftsteller" or occasionally "Herr Johnson." This small detail clearly defines the boundary between the author and Gesine. This title serves two functions: it alludes to their common DDR background while simultaneously creating a distance in what would normally be seen as an intimate relationship between subject and narrator. It is a relationship which is far more intimate than an acquaintance, yet never a friendship. They interact at all times on a strictly professional basis:

> . . . sie hat den Verfasser suchen lassen nach den Einwirkungen von vier gesellschaftlichen Systemen auf ihr Leben, sie läßt den Verfasser mit ihrem Kind, mit ihren Freunden und Vorgesetzten und Feinden Beziehungen unterhalten weit über die Verpflichtungen von Bekannschaften hinaus. Sei es in den Gedanken des Verfassers, sie wird ihm widersprechen, wenn er ihr eine

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[24] Johnson, Begleitumstände 413.

[25] Sitting in the back row at Johnson's lecture for the Jewish American Congress Gesine observes: "Johnson saß krumm hinter dem grünen Tuch, hielt sein Manuskript mit beiden Händen abgedeckt, spiegelte das Licht der Scheinwerfer in seiner Glatze und musterte den Saal nur flüchtig mit Blicken zwischen Brauen und Brillenrand hindurch" (I, 256).

> Entscheidung vorschlägt, die zu ihren Bedürfnissen und Bedingungen nicht paßt.[26]

While Gesine's narrative partner knows a great deal about his subject's past and present experiences, his knowledge is limited to what she allows him: "Ich beschreibe ihr Leben und was in ihrem Bewußtsein vorgeht, und zwar genau in den Stücken, die sie für angebracht hält."[27] His position is by no means omniscient. His knowledge of her inner thoughts is limited to what she chooses to tell him. Van der Will characterizes the author's role in the novel as that of a "scribe," with the Gesine figure alternating between first and third person narrative voice:

> By employing the author as her scribe the narrator can refer to herself in the third person, reverting to the first person plural only when Marie, her daughter, is implicitly included in the angle of narration and reserving the first person singular for moments of extremely private and personally involved aspects of her life. Although the author obviously generates the text, he does so in the service of fictional constraints laid on him by the chief narrator figure.[28]

While generally accurate, van der Will implies a passivity on the part of the narrator that is at odds with textual evidence. Far from functioning solely as a conduit of Gesine's thoughts and experiences, the narrator performs a

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[26] Johnson, "Rede anläßlich der Entgegennahme des Georg-Büchner-Preises 1971," Johnsons "Jahrestage" 55. Throughout Johnson is quite conscious of the boundary estahlished hetween Gesine and her narrative partner. "Wenn Sie wollen, ist das sogar ein naturalistischer Blickwinkel; ich erzähle so viel, wie die Person wissen kann, nicht aber, was sie nicht wissen könnte. . . . Wenn diese Person entscheidet, daß sie etwas mehr über ihren Großvater wissen möchte, dann muß ich ehen hingehen und ihr den Kapp-Putsch und ihr die mögliche und wirkliche Rolle ihres Großvaters zeigen. Wenn sie das wissen will, dann hesorge ich ihr das Wissen." (Ree Post-Adams, "Antworten von Uwe Johnson. Ein Gespräch mit dem Autor," Ich überlege mir die Geschichte 276).

[27] Lehner 112.

[28] van der Will 193.

series of pro-active tasks. He undertakes research for Gesine and is responsible for the choreography of narrative strands and supplementary materials. Fickert employs the more active characterization of "stage director."

While the scope of the narrative is defined by Gesine's perspective, it is the narrator through whom the multiple strands are conveyed. To identify her viewpoint exclusively with the third person narrative stance belies the partnership between the author and Gesine as described in the text:

> *Wer erzählt hier eigentlich, Gesine.*
> *Wir beide. Das hörst du doch, Johnson.* (I, 256)

The element of partnership is one of the novel's integral components. The introduction of an objective filter prevents the narrative from becoming a completely subjective portrayal of present and past within the cliched and entirely subjective scope of a diary:

> *Ich will dir mal as sagen, du Schriftsteller. . . .*
> *Ein Jahr hab ich dir gegeben. So unser Vertrag. Nun beschreibe das Jahr.*
> *Und was vor dem Jahr war.*
> *Keine Ausflüchte!*
> *Wie es kam zu dem Jahr.*
> *In diesem verabredeten Jahr, seit dem 20. August 1967. . . .*
>
> *Soll es denn doch ein Tagebuch werden?*
> *Nein. Nie. Ich halt mich an den Vertrag.* (IV, 1426-27)

In the course of this contractual relationship, as in any other, a certain degree of friction develops. Gesine does not always agree with her narrative partners decisions, and at times feels hemmed in by his presence. Both are fully dependent on each other in the generation of the narrative. It is Gesine's story that is being told, but the author is poised to

step in when she is no longer able to tell it. Johnson relays the story of her mother's suicide when Gesine is struck suddenly with a high fever.

This raises some essential questions as to the relationship between the author and his fictional character. While the text intimates there is an element of partnership, Johnson denies that he has any influence on the material Gesine conveys or shapes that her story takes: "Ich bin der Aufzeichnende und komme weiter nicht in Betracht."[29] Instead he characterizes the partnership as a cooperative effort: "Das ist ein Arbeitsverhältnis, eine Cooperation gewesen. Wir haben eine Sache gemeinsam gemacht."[30] The demands of Gesine's job and her responsibilities as a single parent would make it almost impossible to accomplish the research necessary to provide a thoroughly detailed historical background: ". . . dann ist es doch meine Aufgabe, ihr das herauszufinden, wie das damals war, und dann abzuwarten, ob das zu ihr, so wie sie ist, paßt oder ob es nicht zu ihr paßt."[31] The volume of the New York Times reading alone is prohibitive. Arthur "Punch" Sulzberger, the newspaper's publisher at the time claims that, "anybody who claims to read the entire paper every day is either the world's fastest reader or the world's biggest liar."[32] Collaboration between Gesine and her narrative partner is apparent in many of the New York Times passages.

There are a range of opinions on the narrative stance in the New York story. Ingeborg Hoesterey considers Gesine both subject and narrator

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[29] Daiber 129.

[30] Daiber 130.

[31] Manfred Durzak, "Dieser langsame Weg zu einer größeren Genauigkeit" 438.

[32] "The Kingdom and the Cabbage," Time 15 Aug. 1977: 73.

of the contemporary strand, as well as her childhood recollections. According to Hoesterey, Gesine's reconstruction of the past is embedded in what is essentially a first-person narrative since her viewpoint dominates the novel. Her narrative partner is, in effect, a handy assistant, but does not himself have a significant impact on the telling of the story: "Indes muß unmittelbar hinzugefügt werden, daß ihre zweisträngige Erzählung kein Unternehmen im Alleingang ist, sondern problematisch überlagert ist durch die Assistenz des Autor-Erzählers."[33] However, most critics treat the New York story and the New York Times items as identical.

Johnson's role as "der Aufzeichnende" is necessary if only to make the novel itself believable:

> The author Johnson is part of the fictional structure in that he acts as writer who keeps Gesine's diary and electronic notebook and, as is evident by the persistent 'Ich stelle mir vor . . .' of the first diary entry (21 August, 1967), he is responsible for providing the general contextual setting within which his narrated and narrating figures live. Occasionally tensions are allowed to arise between the various narrator figures and internal addressees (Gesine, Marie, Mr. Erichson, etc.) and, more significantly, between the author and the narrator, and it is at such moments that the reader is made aware of the complex narrative arrangement that is involved in the final presentation of the text.[34]

Nowhere is the collaboration between Gesine and the fictional Johnson more evident than in the New York Times segments.

Since the relationship between character and author is freely acknowledged within the text itself, to what extent is the figure of Gesine dependent on the author? "Wo denn ist sie Johnsons Abbild, wo sein

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[33] Hoesterey 14.

[34] van der Will 193.

Wunschbild, wo sein Gegenbild?"[35] Why does Johnson choose Gesine Cresspahl, not only as the central figure of the Jahrestage, but as the spokesperson of an entire generation? She functions as a cipher for a common experience, a society, and a generation:

> . . . es hätte jemand öffentlich gesagt, warum ich diese Gesine Cresspahl denn nicht endlich umbringe, damit ein Ende sei. Darauf würde ich antworten, daß ich das nicht kann. Ich bin mit ihr bekannt seit dem Jahre 1956. Rechnen Sie nach: Das ist eine zu lange Zeit für solche Morde, und außerdem ist sie mir wichtig. . . . Sie gehört vielmehr zu den kleinen Leuten, und in der Zeit dieses Buches, jedenfalls auf einer Ebene, gehört sie wirklich zu den kleinen Leuten: Sie ist eine Angestellte.[36]

Gesine, by virtue of her very ordinariness, provides Johnson with the ideal narrator. She is one insignificant bank employee in a fast-paced metropolis. The relevance of her struggle with the past occurs against this intimidating, impersonal backdrop. Gesine is a "socially average, ordinary sort of person. But she does have exceptional qualities: her memory and her moral conscience in political matters."[37] Through the eyes of his protagonist Johnson creates "eine Welt," whose relevance can only be interpreted through individual understanding.

Are Gesine and Uwe Johnson essentially the same person? Several times it has been suggested that Gesine is actually a projected figure,

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[35] Bengel 311.

[36] Johnson, "Einführung in die 'Jahrestage'" 15.

[37] van der Will 195.

which Johnson categorically denies.[40] A good number of biographical parallels can be drawn in earlier works, and the specific similarities between Gesine's and Johnson's personal histories, especially regarding their stays in New York, cannot be overlooked.[41] However, they can be overemphasized, as in the case of Reich-Ranicki, who find that Gesine "wirkt vor allem als Medium: Sie ist es, die Johnsons New-York-Eindrücke übermitteln muß."[42] Gesine and Uwe Johnson are of the same generation (she was born in 1933, he one year later), come from the same region and share a multitude of experiences. Most significant for the purposes of this study are the elements Johnson's stay in New York City which are incorporated into Jahrestage. Like Johnson, Gesine came to America for the first time in 1961. Johnson resided at 243 Riverside Drive from mid-1966 until 1968 while working on a textbook of contemporary German literature for Harcourt, Brace and World. Gesine's departure for Prague on the eve of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia coincides with Johnson's return to Germany in August of 1968. While Gesine is by no means identical with the author, they share a singularly intimate relationship through direct dialogue in Jahrestage.

Johnson states that his characters, although initially his creations, develop an independent identity of their own:

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[40] Osterle, "Strukturfragen und Todesgedanken" 121: "Ich möchte aber noch dem Ausdruck Projektionsfigur widersprechen. Ich kenne diese Dame seit 1956. Ein Paar Wochen aus ihrem Leben im Herbst dieses Jahres habe ich in der 'Mutmaßungen über Jakob' beschrieben oder erzählt. Seitdem habe ich immer gewußt, wo sie war, genau wie ich von anderen Personen--überhaupt von Personen, von denen ich einmal erzählt habe--im Bewußtsein hatte: der und der hat eben geheiratet oder ist gestorben."

[41] See further Wilhelm Johannes Schwarz, Der Erzähler Uwe Johnson (Bern and München: Francke, 1970) 10.

[42] Marcel Reich-Ranicki, "Der trotzige Einzelgänger. Zum Tode des einsamen Schriftstellers Uwe Johnson," Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 14 Mar 1984: 25.

> Wenn ich Erfahrungen eigener Art übernommen habe--aber doch wohl recht selten--dann habe ich immer überlegen müssen: Wie wirkt das auf eine 33jährige Frau? Wie würde sie darauf reagieren? Wie würde sie das bearbeiten? Wie würde sie das erzählen? Auf diesem Wege habe ich das bißchen Material, das ich an Kenntnissen von New York und den Leuten dieser Stadt anbringe, schon so weit verwandelt, daß es von mir aus gesehen unkenntlich ist und als Material allein dieser Gesine gehört.[43]

He endows his character with a separate personality and sphere of experience, totally independent of him. But he also acknowledges that "von mir aus lebt sie."[44] While many elements of the novel have their roots in biographical fact, Johnson has used his characters to distance himself from them. The use of Gesine Cresspahl as the primary medium of perceived experience prevents the novel from being viewed as a blatant biographical reconstruction of Johnson's past. Events are viewed through the filter of another (although fictitious) personality, and are subjected to another criterion of perception. Thus, Johnson's objective is identical with that of Gesine: to attain an objective viewpoint of the past.

The pages of New York's--and the nation's--largest daily newspaper are read religiously each day by Gesine. It provides an authentic channel of information about current events, and creates at the same time a virtually infinite narrative horizon for her reflections and reconstructions. The New York Times is Johnson's primary documentary source in Jahrestage, and it dominates the present-day level of the narrative. Despite the obvious structural and thematic importance of the newspaper, Johnson finds the standard perception of its role in the novel limited. In an interview with Manfred Durzak, Johnson discusses The New York Times

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[43] Osterle 121.

[44] Osterle121.

at length and addresses some misconceptions about its function in Jahrestage. Durzak, who characterizes it as "Hilfsmittel des Erzählens," tries to differentiate between Gesine's private, subjective experiences in New York and a larger, objective reality conveyed through the paper. For Johnson, they are two aspects of the same narrative viewpoint: ". . . die 'New York Times' ist kein Erzählmedium, sondern ein Aspekt des subjektiven Zustandes."[45] He insists that, by directly incorporating the paper in her daily routine, this alternate narrative of daily events is likewise subordinate to Gesine's particular version of reality: "Das ist genauso real wie der Toast, den sie sich am Morgen leistet. Das ist eben vorhanden."[46] Fries points out that the New York Times items, even when not commented upon in the narrative, are not, strictly speaking, documentary: ". . . das Sprachmaterial, das von dem Ausdruck 'dokumentarisch' erfaßt werden kann, existiert überhaupt nicht in seiner ursprünglichen Form, sondern nur als Übersetzung."[47]

The voluminous number of items taken from the pages of The New York Times and the unique role they play in the construction of Johnson's *Amerikabild* set Jahrestage apart from other post-war novels which address Germany's recent past. All of the many disparate elements which make up the daily news--from the paper's banner to the classified ads, and ranging from headlines to everyday minutiae--find their way into the narrative at some point. The New York Time's fundamental role in the

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[45] Manfred Durzak, "Dieser langsame Weg zu einer größeren Genauigkeit" 445.

[46] Durzak, "Dieser langsame Weg zu einer größeren Genauigkeit" 446.

[47] Ulrich Fries, Uwe Johnsons "Jahrestage." Erzählstruktur und politische Subjektivität," (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990) 110.

novel augments Johnson's characteristic reliance on the juxtaposition of numerous narrative strands derived from a wide variety of sources.

Ironically, no one element has been more belittled and eschewed by critics. The newspaper has been largely dismissed as simply a structural mechanism or as a convenient shorthand for the inclusion of "die Wirklichkeit der weißen amerikanischen Mittelschicht,"[48] which lies outside the realm of Gesine's immediate experience. Just as Grabbe's Devil prescribes three verses of Klopstock's Der Messias (1748/73) as "unfehlbares Schlafmittel,"[49] at least one critic finds Gesine's paper of choice is "Opium für exilierte Mecklenburger."[50] In his tepid review of the novel's English translation, Theodore Ziolkowski refers to the "relentless method" of Johnson's daily news recaps.[51] Several critics side with Christian Gebert, who labels Johnson's excessive penchant for citation unnecessary:

> Was wir so in diesem Roman über New York und Amerika erfahren, ist einmal die zumeist lediglich durch Zitation vermittelte und daher unverbindliche Realität . . . erspielte Zitatcollage aus der NYT. . . . Es scheint nur eine pflichtmäßige moralische Verbeugung vor dem Zeitgeist, wenn da ständig Vietnam, KZ-Prozesse in der Bundesrepublik, Studenten-demonstrationen und Rassenunruhen bloß zitiert werden. "Die NYT hält für nötig, daß wir dies wissen."

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[48] Sigrun Storz-Sahl, Erinnerung und Erfahrung: Geschichtsphilosophie und ästhetische Erfahrung in Uwe Johnsons "Jahrestagen" (Frankfurt a.M. and New York: Peter Lang, 1988) 163.

[49] From Christian Dietrich Grabbe's Scherz, Satire, Ironie und tiefere Bedeutung (1927).

[50] Peter Demetz, "Uwe Johnsons Blick in die Epoche" 195.

[51] Ziolkowski 61.

> --Vor allem Johnson hält es für nötig, der sie für uns fleißig abschrieb. 'Süns hev'ck mi nich ve dacht.'[52]

Joachim Kaiser plainly exhibits relief at the scaled-down role of news media in the novel's concluding volume: "Jetzt darf freilich das Magazin 'Time' nicht mehr erwähnt werden, weil doch die im Band IV Gott sei Dank nicht mehr so dominierende 'New York Times' die einzige Informationsquelle sein soll."[53] In his review of the same volume even Johnson enthusiast Rolf Becker finally admits an amicable frustration with Gesine's news addiction: "Schon damals hatten wir uns gewünscht, die gewissenhafte Leserin Gesine möge doch ab und zu eine Nummer der fabelhaften Zeitung überschlagen."[54]

In general, statements regarding The New York Times and the U.S. in the late Sixties are riddled with inaccuracies and bias, if not overt hostility. Roland Wiegenstein, for example, seizes Johnson's frequent mention of the Vietnam War as an opportunity to vent his political spleen: "Zunächst sind das Begebenheiten aus dem Krieg in Vietnam, bis hin zum täglichen Body-count--man hat das ja rasch vergessen (in den USA will man es vergessen, darum auch hat man sich Ronald Reagan zum Präsidenten gewählt). . . ."[55] In his characterization of the newspaper items as "simple Eselsbrücken," Reich-Ranicki fails to see how the American newspaper could possibly benefit Johnson's narrative:

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[52] Gebert 149.

[53] Kaiser 175.

[54] R. Becker 189.

[55] Wiegenstein 206.

> Überdies hatte ich oft den Eindruck, da Gesine Cressphal erst während ihres Amerikaaufenthalts dazu kam, westliche Zeitungen zu lesen, weshalb sie die 'New York Times' insgeheim immer mit dem 'Neuen Deutschland' vergleicht. Denn was sie an der 'New York Times' verwundert und was sie mit offensichtlichem und nur zuweilen ironisch gedämpftem Respekt hervorhebt, gilt mehr oder weniger auch für einige westeuropäische Blätter. Und wozu hat Johnson seine Gesine nach New York geschickt, wenn das, was sie über Amerika notiert, zum großen Teil doch auf Zeitungslektüre beruht? In Düsseldorf läßt sich die "New York Times" ebenfalls abonnieren und studieren.[56]

In her comparative study, "Mythos Manhattan. Die Fazination einer Stadt," Sigrid Bauschinger asks wryly, if not provocatively: "Was jedoch wären die Jahrestage ohne die 'New York Times'?"[57] Some infer that Johnson's novel would be better off without it. One critic found the newspaper items in the first volume--"dieses Zusammengeschnibbelte"--so tedious that he marked the all Jerichow passages in red, and proceeded to read what he considered the essential story in one sitting "ohne den New Yorker Tagebuchballast."[58] Theodore Ziolkowski's review in The New York Times, where he describes Jahrestage as a "flawed but powerful testament," runs along these same lines. In agreement with the majority of German critics, he finds the "'epochal novel' . . . much more successful." He completely dismisses the New York narrative strand, which of the two is potentially of greater interest to the American audience: "[The] entire New York framework--especially between Gesine and her daughter, surely

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[56] Marcel Reick-Ranicki, "Uwe Johnsons neuer Roman," Johnsons "Jahrestage" 139.

[57] Bauschinger 389.

[58] text + kritik: Uwe Johnson 65/66 (1980) 62.

the most insufferable brat in recent fiction--seems wholly contrived and conveys no convincing sense of Gesine's career or life."[59] Ziolkowski was, however, reviewing a somewhat different novel.

In preparing the English edition for publication, Johnson was himself forced to weigh the relative value of the "New York" material against that of the "Jerichow" story. His American publisher, Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, insisted on a shorter text. When faced with an ultimatum, he chose to cut passages from the contemporary rather than the historical narrative.[60] Johnson cut approximately one-third of the novel for the abridged English translation, which was published in two volumes. Most of the eliminated passages chronicled current events. Some daily entries were done away with entirely. Johnson's pragmatic editorial decision to favor the "Jerichow" story proved to be a grievous mistake. Despite the fact that Jahrestage is also about a pivotal period in U.S. history, the novel never grabbed the interest of American readers. The reduced role of present-day narrative in Anniversaries and Ziolkowski's review both played a role in this. Thirty years later, Johnson's shortsighted editing of now crucial passages in Anniversaries significantly hampers the novel's significance in the U.S.

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59 Ziolkowski 61.

60 According to Helen Wolff, his publisher at Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Johnson personally selected which passages to cut with little discussion (Eberhard Fahlke and Jeremy Gaines, "Auskünfte für eine Übersetzerin," "Ich überlege mir die Geschichte . . ." Uwe Johnson im Gespräch, 317). For Johnson, it seemed "that the choice was between cutting or having a book at all, and so I preferred a shortened book. And my involvement was limited. So I thought, if there must be cutting, then I'll do it myself. In the main such chapters were left out that have to do with conditions in America, in which case one can assume that the public knows about them already, although perhaps not in the illumination of Anniversaries." A. Leslie Willson, "'An unacknowledged humorist': An Interview with Uwe Johnson. Sheerness-in-Kent, 20 April 1982," Dimension: Contemporary German Arts and Letters 15 (1982): 405-6.

Despite the breadth of Johnson's descriptions of New York City and his meticulous attention to detail, he still garners some criticism for his omissions. For example, there are few references to the city's diverse entertainment and cultural life. In the course of a year she manages only to take in one movie and a baseball game. The latter is hardly voluntary, as it is at her boss' invitation. The narrow focus of Gesine's existence (work, home, commute) defines the parameters of contact with New York and its denizens. In a 1983 interview with Heinrich Vormweg Johnson describes Gesine as "eine aufmerksame Zeitgenossin," who consciously tests and revises "eine verfälschte Vergangenheit." As an adult she is in the position to evaluate her own participation (or lack thereof) in the historical and political process:

> Immerhin haben vier verschiedene politische Systeme sich bemüht, an ihrer Person etwas zu verändern. Sie hat allmählich begriffen, was da mit ihr versucht worden ist, und sie hat versucht, sich zu wehren.[61]

Gesine's tutelage under the Nazis, the socialists, and later the Allies, was a function of politics and proximity. Johnson's point is that Gesine was an accidental, rather than an ideological participant. Using a similar phrase, Vormweg seeks to turn the conversation from Gesine's early formative experiences to her life in New York: "Sie nimmt auch Teil an der New Yorker Gegenwart." Johnson replies: "Notwendigerweise, ja."[62] For the first time, Gesine can exercise some small degree of autonomy in determining how she participates socially and politically. In New York Gesine has the objective distance and the motivation to critically evaluate her surroundings, as well as her history. Given the central role of the New

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[61] Becker, Michaelis and Vormweg 305.

[62] Becker, Michaelis and Vormweg 305.

York narrative in the novel, elements which Johnson deems "necessary" to his *Amerikabild* assume great significance. In a novel which Durzak describes as an "ozeanische(s) Konglomerat von in Sprache umgesetzten Wirklichkeitspartikeln,"[63] the nature of these fragments of reality and the transformation they undergo in the narrative are both areas of central importance in the full consideration of Jahrestage.

While Gesine's obsession with The New York Times has been duly noted with varying degrees of enthusiasm, most critics have declined to undertake a closer examination of the newspaper's role despite Johnson's numerous invitations within the text to do so.[64] Consistently, newspaper items are accepted at face value as citations and not as narrative passages in their own right. In addition, the newspaper's national role and reputation during the late Sixties is more significant for the novel than the current state of Jahrestage scholarship would belie. Removed from the web of political and social reference provided by The New York Times and the American Vietnam War era Jahrestage is just another historical novel. The subsequent analysis of the newspaper's role in the novel will attempt to correct this oversight in current Johnson scholarship.

The use of The New York Times as a narrative medium is a variation on Johnson's narrative model. His prose typically includes elements of documentary and pseudo-documentary materials. Earlier novels such as Mutmaßungen über Jakob, Das dritte Buch über Achim, as well as the little-known Ingeborg Bachmann biography, Eine Reise nach Klagenfurt, all include information gleaned from official or otherwise "objective"

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63 Manfred Durzak, "Mimesis und Wahrheitsfindung. Probleme des realistischen Romans. Uwe Johnsons 'Jahrestage,'" Gespräche über den Roman 461.

64 Some of the notable exceptions include: Kurt Fickert, Anita Krätzer, Sara Lennox and Sigrun Storz-Sahl.

sources. Although the documentary materials included in the two earlier novels are manufactured by the author, their documentary character implies a certain incorruptible objectivity within the context of the work. The information is presented as both accurate and unbiased. However, from the moment of their injection into the narrative these items are subjected to incessant reevaluation as circumstances change or new information surfaces. The relevance and verity of information within the narrative itself can only be speculated upon, since the narrative context is in constant flux. More often than not the introduction of a new documentary source necessitates the reevaluation of previous perceptions and conclusions on the part of the reader. The ensuing speculation then propels the narrative in a previously unconsidered direction. This narrative stance so intrinsic to Johnson's fiction is further emphasized by the titles of the two earlier novels, as well as Johnson's working title for the Achim biography.[65]

The implied authenticity of the documentary materials in the narrative is not directly challenged in Johnson's fiction. Questions of validity and objectivity arise as a function of the narrative process. In his "Lebensbild in Zitaten,"[66] Johnson relies heavily on archival and documentary materials to raze Bachmann's pop-culture image which eclipses the "real" Bachmann and her work. The narrator of Eine Reise nach Klagenfurt, who in this instance is identical with Johnson himself, does not question the integrity of the information he gathers. Johnson's "Reise" is not only a physical pilgrimage to Ingeborg Bachmann's

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[65] i.e. "Eine Beschreibung einer Beschreibung."

[66] From the title of Rolf Michaelis' review of Eine Reise nach Klagenfurt. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 23 Nov. 1974.

birthplace in the days following her death, but is also a journey into the past as he searches for traces of Bachmann and her "unsichtbare Stadt" of her childhood. Regardless of the source--tourist brochures, railroad timetables, the local paper, Bachmann's personal correspondence--all items are presented as equally legitimate. Even the narrator's recollections of conversations and phone calls are footnoted in the text, just as if they existed as real documents. The narrator fills the role of "Aussucher" and editor who compiles and arranges the information, occasionally commenting when necessary. The materials interact with each other through their placement in the text with only minimal interference from the narrator. It is up to the reader to judge the merits and implications of each piece of information. The narrator's true function in the narrative is obscured by the straightforward presentation of factual materials. For the most part he is content to let the facts and statistics speak for themselves. He manipulates the text behind the scenes, so to speak, as he selects, edits, and finally, arranges the materials. It is only in the context of a childhood brutally destroyed by Fascism that the documentary materials take on a menacing, deceitful or tragic qualities.

Johnson's use of documentary materials in the non-fictional Eine Reise nach Klagenfurt is just as effective as in his fiction. The result is a highly subjective biographical portrayal of Bachmann with all the earmarks of an objective documentary. The subjectivity results from the inseparability of author, narrator and the generation of the text itself. The reader must make the inferences and connections lacking in the text, which is normally the task of the biographer. The collaborative process between narrator and reader produces a unique and intimate portrait of

Bachmann, as well as the events which left an indelible mark on her psyche and her writing.

Information gleaned from tapped phone conversations, newspaper articles, government reports and photographs are used to hedge the gap between what the narrator can and cannot know. Johnson's narrative model rejects the idea of Balzac's "Manieren der Allwissenheit." According to Johnson, the narrator is also limited by access to sources and the scope of his information. Discrepancies in the text created by conflicting or incomplete information remain unresolved in Johnson's novels. Because the means of resolution lies outside the scope of the text itself, it becomes the job of the reader to reach his or her own conclusions based on the information given in the narrative.

There are numerous examples of this strategy in Johnson's novels. Apart from the mysterious circumstances surrounding Jakob's death in Mutmaßungen über Jakob, it is never explained why Gesine is carrying a miniature camera and a handgun when she returns illegally to the GDR. The implications are never addressed in the text, but certainly her real motives for sneaking across the border just as Hungary teeters on the brink of revolution must be called into question by the reader. A less dramatic example in Das dritte Buch über Achim, is the photo which precipitates the final break between the biographer and his subject. Karsch first states that it arrived in the mail and then later describes how he mysteriously discovered it in his suit pocket.

Among the many examples of such discrepancies in Jahrestage are those concerning Gesine's father, Heinrich Cresspahl. One mystery never completely cleared up in the retrospective narrative is the nature of his activities during World War II. Gesine bases her conclusion on a 1940

British half-penny discovered in her father's things after his death.[67] Piecing together her memories and other bits of evidence, Gesine surmises he spied for the British while employed by the Nazis to build a military airfield on the outskirts of Jerichow. His knowledge of what was taking place there, as well as his ties to England made him a prime candidate for recruitment: "Für jemanden, den ein Engländer etwas fragen konnte, wußte Cresspahl eine Menge Staatsgeheimnisse" (II, 633). Even though this is a very plausible explanation, it is not the only one. She seems convinced at one point that her father did indeed spy for the British, and states: "Wann Cressphal damit anfing, habe ich zu fragen vergessen; im September 1939 arbeitete er schon einige Monate für die britische Abwehr" (II, 809). However, there are other considerations which undermine Gesine's tenuous conclusions. She can only speculate, for instance, how the first contact was made between her father and his British handler: "Nun weiß ich etwas nicht. . . . Ich stelle mir vor" (II, 811). Upon reflection Gesine concludes that, even granting her father the benefit of doubt, his motives for spying would have been less than heroic:

> Erpreßt und gekauft und sicher. Nur daß er sich aus eigenem entschlossen hatte und seine Freiheit zuverlässig behalten. (II, 814)

Even Gesine's motives for telling such a story come under scrutiny when Marie points out:

> - Alle in deiner Familie haben den Nazis in die Hand gearbeitet, und Cresspahl erst recht. Nun willst du wenigstens einem die Ehre retten, und deinem Vater am liebsten. (II, 810)

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67 "Den hat man mir aus Jerichow geschickt, als mein Vater gestorben war. Das war 1962, und er ist seit Kriegsanfang nie mehr in England gewesen" (II, 810).

Although Marie accuses her mother of once again resolving the loose ends rather too neatly, she has to either accept or reject Gesine's version of events as they are denied the luxury of definitive proof one way or the other. The constant destabilization of the narrative resulting from conflicting versions of reality, such as in the case of Heinrich Cresspahl, generates forward momentum in an otherwise sluggish plot.

As illustrated by these examples, the relevance of the information and its place in the narrative puzzle changes constantly. In some instances, contradictions remain intentionally unresolved within the confines of the narrative. However, the primary role of documentary materials is to substantiate a version--or perhaps multiple versions--of reality. In Jahrestage, Johnson synthesizes an accurate and detailed depiction of New York City and life in the United States during the late 1960s. His *Amerikabild* is based in large part on his own meticulous observations and further authenticated by items from The New York Times. By firmly anchoring Gesine's story in a familiar and exceedingly well-documented reality, the disparity between fiction and nonfiction--as well as that between history (subjective) and reality (objective)--is in large part suspended.

Clearly, the reader could get hold of the paper and have access to the same information as Gesine does. In a discussion of Mutmaßungen über Jakob, Johnson describes an "ideal reader"[68] who would read the text a number of times and branch out for independent explorations initiated by the text in a process which mirrors the author's own creative process: "Ich habe das Buch so geschrieben, als würden die Leute es so langsam lesen,

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[68] For for a detailed analysis of the reader's interaction with the text invited by Johnson's narrative approach see further Kurt Fickert, Dialogue with the Reader..

wie ich es geschrieben habe."[69] The collaborative process between author and reader generates a further "Version der Wirklichkeit," which is linked symbiotically to the version offered in the novel:

> Sie sind eingeladen, diese Version der Wirklichkeit zu vergleichen mit jener, die Sie unterhalten und pflegen. Vielleicht paßt der andere, der unterschiedliche Blick in die Ihre hinein.[70]

To some degree Johnson incorporates this envisaged role of the reader in all of his novels. His invitation to such an approach in Jahrestage has an additional caveat which has far-reaching implications for the novel's "Version der Wirklichkeit" as it applies to the U.S. in the late 1960s. What was previously a comparative effort confined to the text and the reader has been expanded to include a third, and entirely independent version of reality, embodied in the pages of The New York Times. Gesine, as well as the reader, can question the newspaper's "Version der Wirklichkeit" and compare it with their own understanding of events.

The use of authentic newspaper items in Jahrestage originates from an earlier project. Johnson was working on a documentary narrative incorporating newspaper as early as 1961, titled Geschichte der Städte Berlins. The work, which would consist in large part of newspaper accounts, was to address the Wall and its division of Berlin. He eventually shelved the project in frustration when he was unable to keep up narratively with the glut of information generated by the complicated and

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[69] In the next breath, however, Johnson shows he has little faith in the modern-day reading public: "Wir haben aber eine ganz besondere Form des Lesens heutzutage, die sehr hastig ist und sich eigentlich nur nach Signalen orientiert. . . ." Arnhelm Neusüß, "Über die Schwierigkeiten beim Schreiben der Wahrheit: Gespräch mit Uwe Johnson (1961)," Uwe Johnson 40.

[70] Johnson, "Vorschläge zur Prüfung eines Romans" 35.

extremely fluid political situation. In their unadulterated form the materials proved unmanageable, and ultimately, useless in reconstructing a coherent narrative version of events.

Eberhard Fahlke points to the lessons learned from the failure of this early narrative experiment as key to the successful incorporation of The New York Times in Jahrestage. Two significant changes are made which allow the integration of such a vast spectrum of material into the novel. First, he establishes Gesine as a narrative filter, which allows Johnson to pick and choose items from a world-wide spectrum of events:

> Das Interessante am Umgang mit der New York Times ist, daß er immer gebrochen ist über das Subjekt Gesine Cresspahl, also im Spiel mit "Ich soll ihr Bewußtsein des Tages darstellen," das selber wieder gebrochen ist: "Das Bewußtsein des Tages" ist ein Werbeslogan, den die New York Times selber verkauft hat. Uwe Johnson wußte das natürlich und er wußte genauso, daß ein Bewußtsein des Tages nicht darzustellen ist. Aber die Leseerfahrung Gesine Cresspahls wird jetzt vom Schriftsteller Johnson im Erzählen ihres Alltages umgesetzt.[71]

The contrast between the two versions, both of which are an inventory of daily events, provides an added dimension to the text. Gesine's versions of The New York Times items play significant structural and thematic roles in Jahrestage. They provide the narrative's underpinnings, just as they create structure and order for Gesine's unvarying routine. The daily grind, described by Johnson in an interview, is quickly established in the novel:

> Die Tendenz ist, den Ablauf des Tages zu kennzeichnen. Jeden Tag erscheint die Wirklichkeit in der New York Times in einer faßlichen und zumutbaren Darstellung. Damit muß die Gesine sich beschäftigen. In der Regel

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[71] " 'Mit verzögerter Phantasie." Gespräch mit Eberhard Fahlke." Dimension2. 268.

> liest sie die Zeitung am Morgen, das heißt, die Nachrichten stehen am Anfang des Kapitels. Daran schließt sich dann der Arbeitsalltag an oder auch ein Ausflug in die Umgebung von New York oder aber--bald durch Assoziationen verbunden, bald unverbunden--die Erinnerungen an eines von den Jahren 1920-61.[72]

Despite Johnson's straightforward characterization of the link between Gesine, The New York Times and the text, the relationship is actually far more complex. The paper delineates, or frames, various parts of the narrative. Newspaper items preface and close many of the daily entries, just as reading the newspaper defines Gesine's day. It physically marks Gesine's transition from home to work, and also a means of transition from the present-day to the retrospective narrative. Finally, it represents a larger reality of which Gesine is an observer, not a player. It is a frame of reference for her personal experience which she folds and tucks under her arm as she boards the subway. On a physical level Gesine uses it to shield her from unwanted contact on the subway, as an umbrella and as a club.[73]

Much of the criticism directed at Jahrestage stems from the apparent counterpoint between Gesine's reconstruction of the past and the political climate of the 1960's. Reports of racial riots and the daily body counts from The New York Times recall past events through association. The present continually provides reminders of the past. But Johnson continually denies the existence of any sort of comparison, contrast or counterpoint between the Nazi past and the political climate in America. Such parallels, Johnson maintains, are purely accidental and arise naturally from the material itself.

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[72] Osterle 129.

[73] Martin Alber, "Gesine Cresspahl und die 'New York Times.' Zeitungstexte in Uwe Johnsons Roman 'Jahrestage,'" diss. Wesfälische Wilhelms-Universität, 1990, 66.

The difference between the newspaper items in their original documentary context and their narrative restatement in Jahrestage is striking. While Johnson's extensive use of New York Times implies a certain journalistic objectivity in describing events, nothing could be further from the truth when confronted with the original articles. The transformation of documentary (or pseudo-documentary) materials plays a role in earlier novels, but not as overtly or consistently as in Jahrestage.[74] The newspaper's status as one "Version der Wirklichkeit" independent of the text is underscored in numerous ways. It is Gesine's primary source of outside information, but she is not hesitant to turn to other sources should she feel the need. When Rudi Dutschke is assassinated in Berlin, she phones her friend Anita dismissing the New York Times account as biased and incomplete. Gesine does not blindly accept the paper as an objective, reliable source. She is aware of the many influences on the news. It is a composite of human effort which reflects their beliefs, biases and agendas. The paper is also a product. The news and how it is packaged is to some extent a business decision.

To expand her limited contact to the world outside of work and home, Gesine relies on the media. She is devoted to her newspaper: "Die Kundin kauft keine Zeitung als die New York Times" (I, 14). She also reads Der Spiegel regularly and listens to the radio. However, the role of other media

[74] In the above cited interview Eberhard Fahlke, director of the Uwe Johnson-Archiv in Frankfurt, describes the institute's effort to catalog and correlate Johnson's prose and sources in a computer database and the promise this approach has for future research. He briefly identifies three examples in Johnson's prose where Der Spiegel was clearly used as a documentary source. However, the similarities are deeply buried in the narrative and are not identified as they are in Jahrestage.

is limited.[75] There is no television in the apartment until Marie rents one in order to watch Robert Kennedy's funeral on national television, whose maudlin coverage only confirms Gesine's prejudices against television: "Und was trugen zwei Möbelpacker am späten Abend in die Cressphalsche Wohnung, die seit sieben Jahren gefeit war gegen die amerikanische Television, was schlugen nun die pädagogischen, die wirtschaftlichen und die mütterlichen Erwägungen?" (IV, 1302) A day without a paper hardly registers, "als sei nur mit ihr der Tag zu beweisen" (I, 15). On a daily basis The New York Times packages world events in comprehensible segments, which Gesine can then critically evaluate.

A second narrative device, Johnson's personification of the paper, creates a critical estrangement between Gesine and her primary source of information. Early on the role of The New York Times assumes a more personal dimension. The newspaper's reputation manifests itself in Gesine's "Tante Times," whom she pictures as an elderly maiden aunt: "Eine ältere Person, nicht eben jüngferlich, jedoch keusch" (IV, 1509). The paper's persona, "unsere erprobte Lieferantin von Wirklichkeit" (II, 609), is like a member of the family. She is opinionated, high-minded, no-nonsense, precise, and somewhat stuffy. Gesine's role as an information filter is mirrored by "Tante Times," whose editorial practices have a profound impact on the news she reads. She is described as a prim and proper elderly maiden aunt "aus vornehmer Familie" (I, 38). The dynamic between the two is made possible by Gesine's separation between news

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[75] Johnson explains his singular focus on print media to the hectic lifestyle of a single parent: ". . . es ist ja sonst niemand da. Da kann sie weder Rundfunk hören noch fernsehen, noch Zeitung lesen. . . . Sie kann das also erst in der U-Bahn tun und in den Minuten, die sie zu früh ins Büro kommt, und das ist ihre Situation, sowohl der Entwicklung wie dem Sachverhalt nach." Durzak, "Dieser langsame Weg zu einer größeren Genauigkeit" 444.

content and the editorial practice represented by "Tante Times." Editorial decisions, based on selective criteria, mirror human strengths and foibles.

Gesine is clearly suspicious of what she sees in print. The qualities attributed to "Tante Times" speak to the human--and sometimes fallible--aspects of journalism. By addressing the paper as not just a person, but a member of the family, Gesine can evaluate and criticize. The figure of "Tante Times" allows Gesine a degree of interaction which is not possible with an institution. Like Gesine, whose story is at least in part "die Zu- und Abrichtung einer Person durch verschiedene gesellschaftliche Systeme,"[76] the fictionalized figure of the newspaper represents a body of experience shared by many of the post-war generation. This generation shares a fundamental distrust of the press. "Tante Times" gives a face to those political, social and financial forces at work in the news industry.

For Gesine, The New York Times represents a lifeline to the larger world outside the narrow confines of the bank where she works and her Riverside Drive apartment. On a formal level, items from the newspaper provide a counterweight to Gesine's confining, mundane world of work and, at the same time, the contextual background for her life experience. Through its pages Gesine assimilates a larger reality--the society and times of which she is reluctantly a part.

The incorporation of print and visual media, as well as the narrative techniques used to mimic them, is well-established in fiction. These techniques are especially distinct in the modern *Großstadtroman*,[77] a genre to which Jahrestage clearly pays tribute. Again Johnson was

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[76] Lehner 108.

[77] Bauschinger 390. See also Volker Klotz, Die erzählte Stadt. Ein Sujet als Herausforderung des Romans von Lesage bis Döblin (Hanser: München, 1969).

influenced in this area by Alfred Döblin's Berlin Alexanderplatz and John Dos Passos' Manhattan Transfer. In both instances the authors adapted devices from other media to create a narrative idiom which reflected the pace, fragmentation and alienation symptomatic of modern urban life. Interestingly, two other novels published within a year on either side of the first volume of Jahrestage also rely heavily on documentary materials in the form of newspaper articles, among other sources, to chronicle American political and social developments during the Vietnam War era. A variety of tabloids, including the National Inquirer and the New York Post, are quoted in Jürg Federspiel's Museum des Hasses (1969). Reinhard Lettau takes articles from the Los Angeles Times as his point of departure for America-bashing in Täglicher Faschismus. Amerikanische Evidenz aus 6 Monaten (1971). Both works use newspaper items to substantiate views which are intensely critical of the U.S. Johnson sees his use of The New York Times, however, as distinctly different in that the paper is an augmentation of Gesine's consciousness: ". . . ich habe das ('The New York Times') eben nicht isoliert, sondern in das Subjekt mithineingenommen, während Dos Passos das seinen Subjekten gegenüberstellt als Interpretation, als Summary, als Zusammenfassung, wie Sie wollen."[78]

Johnson elaborated on the purpose of the New York Times excisions in his Frankfurt lecture series, stressing in particular the deliberately subjective aspect of the items in their fictionalized narrative form:

> Die Beschäftigung mit der amerikanischen Wirtschaftsgeschichte, der Soziologie, der Mafia, das Auffischen der in der Arbeit versäumten Wirklichkeit der Stadt mit Ausschnitten aus der New York Times, es hatte ausgesehen wie das leichte renegate Selbststudium eines Gaststudenten; tatsächlich war es hinausgelaufen

[78] Durzak, "Dieser langsame Weg zu einer größeren Genauigkeit" 447.

> auf den Versuch, von der Stadt New York und den Staaten U.S.A. annähernd das zu lernen, was Mrs. Cressphal widerfahren war in ihren sechs Jahren Anwesenheit; übrigens war hinkünftig aus der Times statt objektiv subjektiv zu schneiden, mit Mrs. Cressphals Augen, mit Aufmerksamkeit für Berichte von Ereignissen, die ihr auffielen, die sie aufbrachten, mit denen sie zufrieden war.[79]

The news items included in the narrative--from selection to placement--seem to be determined entirely by Gesine. This acknowledged filtering of documentary material through a specific perceptive consciousness in Jahrestage not only reveals a great deal about Gesine Cresspahl, but also reinforces the fact that objectivity, like Johnson's concept of *Wahrheitsfindung*, is ultimately unattainable: "By subordinating document to fiction, Johnson divests it of its objective reality and makes it as impenetrable as subjectivity itself."[80] In fact, in their textual renditions, documentary materials are not divested of the inherent objectivity implied in the original media context, but comprise their own fictive discourse.

Most critics agree that the newspaper items recounted in the narrative appear as they are comprehended by Gesine. Therefore, the items which capture her attention can be considered a direct reflection of her consciousness. The selected items ostensibly chronicle Gesine's present, but in addition reveal a great deal about Gesine herself. Often items from the newspaper furnish the impulse for further reflection and criticism, or trigger memories of the past. Storz-Sahl takes Johnson at his word that the New York Times are reported solely from Gesine's point of view: ". . . in diesem Sinne ist die Auswahl der zitierten Artikel an Gesines

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[79] Johnson, Begleitumstände 412-13.

[80] Ryan 160. See also Sara Lennox, "History in Uwe Johnson's 'Jahrestage'" 31-41.

Persönlichkeit gebunden."[81] Bauschinger and Lennox, who both point to the limited scope of the New York Times material, are more inclined to ascribe the items ultimately to Johnson. Durzak, on the contrary, is tempted to assign this discourse its own narrative identity. In his detailed survey of various narrative devices in Johnson's fiction Fickert dismisses the complexity of the New York Times passages by characterizing the items as "excerpts from articles . . . translated by Johnson in his capacity as the novel's narrator."[82] This filtered--or refracted--version of the day's news accounts for the fragmentary, unlinked presentation of the information. However, this explanation is not completely satisfactory. As Judith Ryan points out: ". . . Gesine does not often comment on these extracts; her attitude, her political views, are deduced from recorded conversations and reminiscences."[83] Presumably, if the reader is permitted to see the paper through Gesine's eyes, then the reader would also be privy to the opinions and associations evoked through reading. But in most instances, the reader has access to only half of the process.

As Gesine tells her narrative partner, "Genosse Schriftsteller," some areas are strictly off-limits. She admonishes him to stick to the terms of their agreement. His job is to report, and nothing further:

> *Meine Psychologie mach ich mir selber, Genosse Schriftsteller. Du mußt sie schon nehmen, wie du sie kriegst.* (IV, 1428)

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[81] Storz-Sahl 165

[82] Fickert, Dialogue with the Reader 91.

[83] Ryan 156. See also Bauschinger, 390.

But this statement seems to pertain more to Gesine's emotional life, which is--at least in one instance--kept under lock and key.[84] Comments and reactions to news events, for the most part, are separated from the items by a new paragraph, abrupt breaks or intervening material. When objective reporting and subjective reaction do appear simultaneously, the narrative identity is often signaled by the use of "wir." This relationship becomes more prevalent in volumes three and four.

There is a striking similarity between Johnson, "Genosse Schriftsteller" (his narrative persona in Jahrestage) and The New York Times in that all three compile the raw materials of history in order to synthesize a collective version of reality. The skillful interweaving of these narrative strands, which at times augment and at others contradict each other, form the structure of the novel. Like the paper, Gesine's goal within the narrative is to relay the circumstances of events. But further, Gesine ideally hopes that Marie--and by extension, the reader--will critically evaluate their sociopolitical environment and the prevalent version of history. But Marie is well aware of the intended subtext:

> Schon gut, Gesine, I dig you. Du wolltest mir was erzählen, nicht aber etwas beibringen. Und doch denk ich mir was. (I, 310)

Johnson's inclusion of everyday reality in the form of the New York Times is an apparently seamless insertion of non-fictive material into a fictional narrative. The topics and events which prompt Gesine to self-reflection and judgment are identical (albeit in condensed form) with those of the reader.

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[84] See "Interview with Marie H. Cresspahl."

Johnson deftly narrows the gap between "die private und gesellschaftliche Existenz unserer Zeit" and his perceived audience.[85]

The role of The New York Times is not nearly so black and white as many critics would imply. Problems with interpretation consistently arise when the items are accepted simply at face value, as has been the practice until now. Consistently, the newspaper items are simplistically described in terms of quotes, excerpts, citations or excisions, all of which are quite misleading. Otherwise careful textual and narrative analyses perpetrate this erroneous characterization of what are, in reality, quite sophisticated narrative passages.[86] There has been little attempt to identify the narrative devices used in these passage. The significance of the transformation from raw material into fictional prose is can be demonstrated in the comparison of the two versions. The implications of this narrative stance and its implications for the understanding of the text have been to date entirely overlooked.

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85 "Das sind dann Vorschläge an den Leser, einmal nachzusehen, ob die private und gesellschaftliche Existenz unserer Zeit so ist, wie in meiner Erzählung vorgestellt, und dann zu vergleichen, ob seine eigenen Ansicht von dieser privaten und öffentlichen Existenz in unserer Gesellschaft denn damit übereinstimmt." Johnson, "Vorschläge zur Prüfung eines Romans" 402.

86 Kurt Fickert, for example, makes no distinction between items that are copyrighted and those that are not (Dialogue with the Reader 91).

CHAPTER 5
"ALS SEI DER TAG NUR MIT IHR ZU BEWEISEN": THE NEW YORK TIMES AS A PARALLEL TEXT

Gesine's versions of New York Times items play significant structural and thematic roles in Jahrestage. The newspaper provides the narrative's underpinnings, just as it is the basis for structure and order in Gesine's unvarying daily routine. The general sentiment in criticism is that the newspaper passages function both as a shorthand rendition of contemporary reality and as an objective landscape against which Gesine's examination of the past unfolds. In one of the few works to specifically address the role of The New York Times in Jahrestage, Martin Alber perpetrates an inaccurate characterization of these passages:

> Hinzugezogen werden Mittel und Umstände, die die Lektüre der New York Times überhaupt erst ermöglichen oder erleichtern. Es findet sich in Jahrestage eine ausgekugelte Infrastruktur mit dem alleinigen Zweck eine optimale, d.h. vollständige und möglichst schnelle Lektüre der Zeitung zu gewährleisten. Die Ausführungen darüber sind von einer realistischen Genauigkeit, die eine nahezu lückenlose Vorstellung der praktischen Lektüre-besorgung und der verschiedenen Lektüresituationen ermöglichen.[1]

This position ignores Johnson's denial that the paper is used merely as another "Erzählmedium": "Das ist nicht etwas, was der Erzähler eingerichtet hat, um bestimmte Sachen der Wirklichkeit besser in den Griff zu

[1] Alber 66.

kriegen."[2] He clearly sees the newspaper items as a significant aspect of Gesine's subjective experience.

Often The New York Times' journalistic objectivity is assumed to carry over to the narrative itself. Fickert, for instance, describes the newspaper as a foil to the "projection of the individual conscience against the background of the moral neutrality of public events."[3] But any "moral neutrality" on the part of the paper is highly questionable, as evidenced by Gesine's skepticism of "Tante Times'" motivations, and her characterization of journalism as a business endeavor:

> In enlarging the scope of his novel by including a great deal of material directly from the Times in such a way that he can take into account the dark side of political and socioeconomic events in 1967-68 while remaining nonjudgemental about them, Johnson is able deftly to pursue his theme of the individual in confrontation with the forces of history in his era.[4]

The incorporation of contemporary reality--which is accomplished primarily throughout the novel's many The New York Times passages--produces a slanted depiction of the U.S. in the late Sixties, contrary to Fickert's contention.

An analysis of the novel's first seven dated entries will further contradict Bernd Neumann's description of Johnson's realism: "Die naturalistische Detail-Genauigkeit soll die realistische 'Wahrheit' des

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[2] Durzak, "Dieser langsame Weg zu einer größeren Genauigkeit" 445.

[3] Kurt Fickert, "Documenting the Novel: Uwe Johnson's Novel 'Jahrestage,'" Germanic Notes 18 (1987): 14.

[4] Fickert, "Documenting the Novel: Uwe Johnson's Novel 'Jahrestage'" 15.

Ganzen gewährleisten."[5] The details, in fact, call into question both the objectivity of the paper and Gesine's own assessment. A comparison between news passages in the text and the original articles shows clearly "all imaginary events" unfold in an highly orchestrated context. The novel's news items are hand-picked to conform to Gesine's personal agenda and interests.

As discussed earlier, Jahretage's New York City setting and the inclusion of The New York Times items is generally considered by critics to be superfluous to Gesine's "primary" story. With only a few exceptions discussion of Johnson's *Amerikabild* and The New York Times is colored by European perceptions and biases, when these aspects are addressed at all. The end result is that the preponderance of Jahrestage criticism at best marginalizes--or at worst ignores--a significant portion of the novel. There are, of course, some significant exceptions to this trend. These include: Roberta Hye's often-cited analysis, Uwe Johnsons "Jahrestage": Die Gegenwart als variierende Wiederholung der Vergangenheit (1978), and Anita Krätzer's discussion of the novel in Studien zum Amerikabild in der neueren deutschen Literatur (1982). Finally, there is Sarah Lennox's provocative and highly critical article, "History in Uwe Johnson's Jahrestage." Discussion of these three studies provides the point of departure for my own analysis of America's Vietnam War era as portrayed in Jahrestage. While these three works address the New York narrative in some detail, they do not, however, examine the links between the original New York Times items and their textual variations. Of the three, only Lennox refers to the original articles in her analysis. Missing entirely

[5] Neumann, Utopie und Memesis 294.

from the discussion of The New York Times--such as it is-- is any mention of the newspaper as a separate and independent text, although Johnson regularly reinforces this idea in the narrative.

Anita Krätzer and Sara Lennox justifiably point to the newspaper's secondary status in scholarship. Lennox further criticizes the lack of interest in the era in which the novel is set. She states in no uncertain terms that the out-of-hand dismissal of New York City and The New York Times has resulted in a skewed, Germano-centric view of the work:

> . . . most critics and scholars now concentrate, with evident relief, on Johnson's gripping tales of the Cressphals in Mecklenburg. But in doing so they have rewritten Johnson's novel and obscured its structuring principles, which are most obviously responsible for the kinds of conclusions Jahrestage's readers must draw about history.[6]

In this initially promising comparison of documentary materials and fictional narrative, Lennox puts forward an altogether negative assessment of Johnson's portrayal of the U.S. in 1967/8. In her own limited comparison of the text with the contents of the corresponding New York Times edition, she labels Johnson's choice of material as "so eccentric and unrepresentative as perhaps even to raise ethical questions about the use to which he has put documentary material."[7] According to Lennox, Johnson's narrative decisions about news events included in Jahrestage point to a deliberate manipulation of the reader. She particularly takes issue with the events which Johnson chooses not to include in the narrative. His editorial practice is, in her estimation, geared to authenticate a specific view of history which, when compared to original

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[6] Lennox 32.

[7] Lennox 38.

sources, is "partial, distorted and tenditious."[8] In this case, Lennox, by identifying herself with the "veteran[s] of 1968,"[9] commits the same mistake for which she so roundly condemns Johnson. She applies her own selective criteria in evaluating the news of the day, and cites a laundry list of omissions which are the basis for her criticism of Jahrestage. Johnson's failing is that his editorial decisions do not match her own.

Of particular relevance to the novel, and a fact which Lennox conveniently ignores, is that Johnson deliberately avoided the "goldenen Käfig" of a visiting position at a university campus. Instead, he preferred a white-collar, urban existence for himself and his protagonist. Except for a few courses at Columbia University, Gesine had no contact with intellectual liberalism or the student movement. In conclusion, Lennox makes the sort of declaration Johnson pointedly avoids in his fiction: "Such an examination shows that, despite its apparently documentary claims, the reality of Jahrestage is in many regards different from and often much bleaker than the reality experienced by others who lived through that period in the United States."[10] Johnson, for his part, makes no claims for a definitive "Version der Wirklichkeit." Theo Buck points out that, unlike many of his colleagues, Johnson did not take advantage of his celebrity status to broadcast his political views through the media, and his prose also reflects this same disinclination to employ a "moralischen Zeigefinger hinter den Sätzen."[11] This is not to suggest his works are entirely

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[8] Lennox 39.

[9] Lennox 38.

[10] Lennox 40.

[11] Buck 17.

apolitical or socially unengaged. Johnson simply puts forward his version of reality, his goal being simply "näher an das tatsächliche Leben heranzukommen."[12] As with earlier works, Johnson suggests that the content of Jahrestage is inseparable from its source material: "Ich versuche, eine Periode der Wirklichkeit darzustellen, und ich kann mich nicht auch noch dafür genieren, daß diese Wirklichkeit nicht heroisch war."[13]

Most analyses of Jahrestage assume the New York Times passages to be objective representations of reality. Even studies dealing specifically with the novel's narrative and structural aspects tend to unquestioningly accept these materials at face value. The common characterization of The New York Times as an ideologically conservative and elitist newspaper is also misleading. A recent CBS news segment, however, characterizes the paper as historically liberal on social issues and middle-of-the-road on almost all other topics. Its critics accuse the paper of elitism and of protecting the same establishment that it reports on.[14] While it is perhaps less ideologically progressive and less politically pro-active by European standards, compared to other papers with national audiences during the Sixties--such as the L.A. Times and Washington Post--The New York Times was viewed in the U.S. as part of the liberal Northeastern press. This was true of both its journalistic and editorial practices.

For most of this century The New York Times has considered one of the best newspapers in the world. It is also known as the most influential.

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[12] Durzak, "Dieser langsame Weg zu einer größeren Genauigkeit" 93.

[13] Durzak, "Dieser langsame Weg zu einer größeren Genauigkeit" 460.

[14] CBS Sunday Morning, CBS, WCPX Orlando, 30 Jun. 1996.

More than any other news media it determines the national news agenda, and literally defines what is--and is not--news at any given time.[15] Since the Spanish-American War it has been firmly established as a member of the elite press.[16] Time designates it "the platinum bar by which editors across the country measure their own papers."[17] It is still one of the only dailies to subscribe to all major international wire services.[18] However, most copy is produced in house. As a rule, "the Times avoids wire-service copy and other canned material, and nearly all the 152,000 words packed into a typical Times are staff-written."[19] For this reason, The New York Times continues to field one of the largest pools of foreign correspondents in the media industry. For many years it was the only paper with such a pool. When James Reston took the paper's editorial helm in May 1968, there were over 1,000 correspondents worldwide,[20] making it by far the world's largest full-time news staff. During the Vietnam War The New York Times was known for its pool of gutsy, talented reporters in Southeast Asia, who consistently stayed on assignment long after after other papers pulled up

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[15] CBS Sunday Morning 30 Jun. 1996

[16] The "elite press" is defined by S. Robert Lichter as those individuals (reporters, anchors, editors, etc.) and their affiliated media "having substantive input into news and public affairs content at the media outlets most influential in forming opinion within other national elites." This definition is generally understood to include publications such as The New York Times, Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, Time, Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report as well as other select radio and TV media. See further S. Robert Lichter, "America and the Third World: A Survey of Leading Media and Business Leaders," Television Coverage of International Affairs, ed. William C. Adams (Norwood N J: Ablex,1982) 69.

[17] "The Kingdom and the Cabbage" 73.

[18] These include AP, UPI, Reuters, Tass and AFP.

[19] "The Kingdom and the Cabbage" 73.

[20] "New York Times: Brunnen der Geschichte" 140.

stakes. In Vietnam, for example, the newspaper's reporters were the first to arrive and the last to leave:

> [The New York Times] had depth and it had talent and this showed in its coverage of Vietnam. It won its first Pulitzer for Vietnam in 1964, before the American combat troops arrived, and it won its last in 1976, after they had gone."[21]

The paper was not without its detractors, who considered its coverage of the war in Vietnam "consistently execrable, and . . . just as consistently inconsistent."[22] For Jahrestage, the paper's presence and policies in Vietnam plays an important role in shaping Gesine's perception of the war, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

The New York Times' commitment to international coverage and investigative reporting has yielded some tangible results. Today it still leads all other papers in the number of Pulitzer Prizes awarded. In 1996 the paper had amassed a total of 73 Pulitzers, compared to it nearest challenger, the Washington Post, at 29.[23] Two of the newspaper's more famous journalists so honored were David Halberstam for his coverage of American's early involvement in Vietnam (1964) and Sydney Schandberg for his reports on Cambodia and its role in the expanded Southeast Asian conflict (1976). The most memorable Pulitzer was awarded to The New York Times in 1971 for publication of the Pentagon Papers, a collections of highly classified documents leaked to the paper which chronicled questionable American activities in Southeast Asia. Arthur Ochs

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[21] Guy Talese, The Powers That Be (New York: World, 1969) 657.

[22] Herman H. Dinsmore, All the News that Fits: A Critical Analysis of the News and Editorial Contents of the New York Times (New Rochelle N.Y.: Arlington House, 1969) 299.

[23] CBS News Sunday Morning 30 June 1996.

("Punch") Sulzberger, then publisher of The New York Times, went to press with the material despite the strenuous opposition of the paper's legal staff. This is only one instance where the newspaper broke a story which subsequently changed government policy. A few years later The Washington Post was able to steal the limelight when Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein broke the Watergate story, but for almost a century The New York Times has consistently represented the cutting edge of journalism.[24]

The New York newspaper market has always embodied the city's governing principle, "survival of the fittest." In 1846 Adolph Ochs bought the struggling paper and rescued it from certain demise. At the time there was little to distinguish it from other small city papers. He first did away with mud-slinging and sensationalism then rampant in the print media. He instead targeted an educated, more sophisticated audience and instigated a return to the paper's early values: political conservatism, an international orientation and moral leadership.[25] Ochs eliminated fiction items, gossip columns, comics and other "frippery" in favor of added local and financial news. This resulted in an immediate boost in the daily's prestige and influence. Within a short period of time he created a "paradigm of probity and thoroughness, emphasizing diplomatic and national political reporting and eschewing titillating accounts of crime and

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[24] Even in the 1960s The Washington Post was known for its consistently outstanding coverage of political and administrative Washington. However, The New York Times was considered more prestigious nationally

[25] John C. Merrill and Harold A. Fisher, The World's Great Dailies: Profiles of Fifty Newspapers (New York: Hasting House, 1980) 224.

scandal."[26] His slogan, "All the News Fit to Print,"[27] still graces The New York Times' banner. Fortunately for fans and critics alike, Ochs' original slogan--"All the Word News, But Not a School for Scandal"--was never used.[28]

The newspaper's international reputation has resulted in some obvious misconceptions about the paper's reading audience. Durzak describes the paper as an "Intellektuellen-Zeitung" and an "Eitelblatt . . . fast eine Art Status-Symbol," whose pages fuel chit-chat of intellectual dilettantes at cocktail parties.[29] Although a juggernaut in national and international news coverage, The New York Times is still "a paper rooted in New York."[30] Coverage of the city and boroughs ranks on a par with that of national and international events. However, the paper does have a reputation for neglecting news in areas not reflected by their readership base: "A few Times editors rationalize such benign neglect by noting that the largely blue-collar and indigent no-collar multitudes of Brooklyn and the Bronx are not Times readers (a defense the paper does not offer in covering other parts of the world."[31] On the negative side, the paper was defined in the late Sixties by its stuffy eight-column-a-page layout, mediocre

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[26] "The Kingdom and the Cabbage" 75.

[27] Johnson wisely never attempts to translate the New York Times slogan. The version used by Der Spiegel leaves much to be desired: "Alle Nachrichte, die es wert sind, gedruckt zu werden." "New York Times: Brunnen der Geschichte" 140.

[28] Talese 210.

[29] Durzak, "Dieser langsame Weg zu einer größeren Genauigkeit" 444.

[30] Merrill and Fisher 223.

[31] "The Kingdom and the Cabbage" 74.

pictures and editing, as well as copy which was often "stilted, wordy and dull."[32]

According to Sigrun Storz-Sahl, Gesine awards her medium of choice "die höchste Glaubwürdigkeit,"[33] especially when compared to other major papers such as the Journal-American and The New York Post. Gesine makes her choice soon after her arrival and sticks with it. She is initially governed by sentimentality rather than intellectual considerations:

> Als wir im April 1961 nach New York kamen, sie hatten für uns noch an Zeitungen die News, den Journal-American, das World-Telegram & Sun, die Post, die Herald Tribune, das Wall Street Journal, die Long Island Press, und die Times. Ich habe die Times gekauft wegen ihrer britischen Abstammung, und wußte noch nicht einmal, daß sie zu der Minorität gehörte, die gegen Richard Nixon John Kennedy als Präsidenten gewünscht hatte. (II, 513-4)

But what Storz-Sahl does not mention is that when the novel begins The New York Times is the city's only major non-specialized newspaper still in existence. The New York World-Journal Tribune (comprised of the former New York Journal-American and the World-Telegram and Sun) went out of business in 1966, preceding the demise of the New York Herald-Tribune by just a few months.[34]

Regardless, when the dust cleared The New York Times was the only reputable daily paper left standing. Today, the paper's influence on national and international news cannot be underestimated. Its immense powerbase can be attributed to several factors. It continues to dominate one

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[32] "The Kingdom and the Cabbage" 74.

[33] Storz-Sahl 162.

[34] Dinsmore 23.

of the world's largest media markets. In addition, it boasts the largest circulation for a regional newspaper, which also makes it attractive to advertisers. As an advertising venue though, The New York Times is unparalleled. Including advertisements the Sunday paper sometimes runs in excess of 400 pages and can weigh in at over four pounds. The Sunday edition has been called "without quarrel America's most dangerous newspaper."[35]

As a regular reader, Gesine is well aware of the paper's commercial aspect. Johnson recognizes the paper as an institution, and personifies it under the guise of "Tante Times": "Eine Umstandskrämerin, ja ,eine Konfusionsrätin, nein" (I, 75). In an interview with Manfred Durzak he contends:

> Diese 'New York Times' wird überführt in den Status einer Tante, und zwar einer Tante, der man manchmal höflich zuhört, der man durch mimisches und anderes Ausdruckswesen seinen Unglauben und seinen Hohn beweist und der man offen widerspricht: Das ist ja doch ein dauernder Dialog zwischen dem, was Sie Medium nennen und was in Wirklichkeit eine Geschäftsgruppe ist.[36]

Compared to other elite papers, The New York Times has transcended its market like no other. More than a quarter of its subscribers live more than 100 miles from New York City.[37] It is a primary source and, conversely, a platform for policy makers. It has comprehensive national and international coverage, and funnels that information to a network of subscribers. It remains a primary source for other national papers: "As

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35 "The Kingdom and the Cabbage" 73.

36 Durzak, "Dieser langsame Weg zu einer größeren Genauigkeit" 443.

37 "The Kingdom and the Cabbage" 73.

the Times goes, so goes a large part of the nation's press."[38] Those papers in Europe, Asia, Latin America and Australia which it does not service directly still depend on it heavily as a news source. From its unequaled position of strength it is no wonder that the paper has had a hand in shaping U.S. policy in various areas. This is especially true of the Vietnam War era.

Until the relatively recent debut of USA Today in the national media arena, the total operations of The New York Times eclipsed those of other large elite daily papers such as The New York News, The Wall Street Journal, The Los Angeles Sun Times, The Washington Post and The Chicago Tribune with a daily circulation of over 870,000.[39] For the year 1967/8 chronicled in Jahrestage, Johnson places its daily circulation at 800,00.[40] Until recently it was the nearest thing among the elite papers to a national daily newspaper. Its closest national competitor was the financially and economically focused The Wall Street Journal.

What has consistently distinguished The New York Times from its competition is a commitment to international news, along with a formidable reputation for accuracy and depth of reporting. It is not uncommon that coverage of a major news event encompasses several multiple primary articles augmented by numerous side-bar items.[41] Der Spiegel calls it as "ein enzyklopädisches Blatt," which consistently boasts detailed coverage across the globe. According to Editor and Publisher, "as

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[38] Dinsmore 20.

[39] "New York Times: Brunnen der Geschichte" 140.

[40] Durzak, "Dieser langsame Weg zu einer größeren Genauigkeit" 443.

[41] Merrill and Fisher 222.

nearly as a newspaper can be, it is a history of one day in the world of events."[42] For editor James Reston, columnist and former Washington Bureau Chief for The New York Times, the paper's significance transcends the boundaries of conventional journalism:

> Unsere oberste Verpflichtung gilt dem Historiker, der in 50 Jahren leben wird. Die 'Times' ist--einmalig für eine Zeitung--Quellenmaterial, und wir dürfen den Brunnen der Geschichte nicht vergiften.[43]

The significance of the paper's self-perceived role of historical chronicle was certainly not lost on Johnson, and had a profound influence on Jahrestage.

Reston's disclaimer--"As nearly as a newspaper can be"--underscores the shortcomings of the media as a whole. Like all other reputable papers, The New York Times is forced to continually evaluate an endless stream of information, and to place items in a context useful to the reader. The newspaper's slogan may be "All the News Fit to Print," but the reality of the news business is very different:

> Most of all, we resist admitting that--reporters, broadcasters, editors or producers--we do exercise great influence in this society, preferring to see ourselves as simple scribes, recording the words and actions of others. It is so much easier that way. But it is an art of self-deception--and not our only one either.[44]

Former Times reporter, David S. Broder addresses the myth of objective reporting, and the danger of believing "something we can honestly call

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[42] Editor and Publisher 29 May 1965: 8.

[43] "New York Times: Brunnen der Geschichte" 140.

[44] David S. Broder, Behind the Front Page: A Candid Look at How News Is Made (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987) 13.

objective news coverage can be obtained through a sort of universality of reporting." He praises the paper's slogan as "splendid" but at the same time states bluntly: "but it is a total fraud."[45] The one indisputable obstacle in objective news coverage--considerations of resources and space aside--is the overwhelming number of events to be reported. The editorial staff must daily sift out which events will receive coverage from a deluge of information. They then decide how the events will be presented and determine the degree of exposure they will receive. Decisions are based on editorial criteria which define the particular priorities and views of the paper:

> Selectivity is the essence of all contemporary journalism. . . . The problem that all of us live with constantly in journalism is what to leave out--what can safely be left out with minimum distorting effects. Of the millions of words, of the thousands of incidents, that occur on the political beat every day, which are going to be singled out for public attention?
> Now, selectivity, which is the essence of the procedure, involves criteria. Criteria means value judgments. And value judgments are just fancy words for prejudices. It seems to me that at the beginning of wisdom about the journalistic side of the process is to recognize that there is no escape from this kind of procedure.[46]

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[45] David S. Broder, "Politicians and Biased Political Information," Politicians and The Press (Washington D.C.: Acropolis Books, 1970) 62.

[46] Broder 62. Eric Barnouw's description of the editorial decisions involved in packaging international news for television is equally applicable to print media: "Leading television newsmen often remind us that each day they face a task so enormous as to be essentially quixotic. The affairs of four billion people, in two hundred nations, speaking thousands of languages, are each day distilled into twenty-three minutes of words and images. The elimination is so drastic that it inevitably distorts, even if done with the greatest integrity and goodwill. The very process of selection . . . is bound to confer on a few items a huge importance and to relegate other matter, people, places, and problems to a secondary level of reality, and perhaps oblivion." Eric Barnouw, "Forward," Television Coverage of The Middle East, eds. William C. Adams and Fay Schreibman (Washington D.C.: School of Public and International Affairs, George Washington University, 1978).

Due to the sheer volume of information found daily in The New York Times, the majority of items understandably fall by the wayside. Gesine is aware of how placement and editing affects perception of daily news:

> Auf fünfzehn mal dreiundzwanzig Zoll, acht Spalten,
> bietet sie über zwanzig Geschichten zur freien Auswahl.
> Sie nennt einen Angeklagten noch nicht schuldig. Von
> den täglichen zwei Morden in der Stadt erwähnt sie nur
> die lehrreichen.
> Sie nennt den Präsidenten nicht bei seinem Vornamen,
> allenfalls das Opfer eines Mordes. (I, 39)

Whether in The New York Times or in Jahrestage itself, what emerges from the overload of information is an agenda of particular items of interest. The version of the days events that emerges in Jahrestage is a further distillation of the total daily news output. It is one more step in the editorial process:

> Editors do not report every event that takes place in the world; nor do they cover a random or even "representative" sample of them. In general they favor events thought to contain the biggest conflict and have the greatest impact. In doing so, however, they represent a distorted picture of the world, a picture that stresses spectacles over mundane events.[47]

James Reston summarizes the inherent conflict between the journalistic ideal of objectivity and the reality of editorial practice:

> It [the story] does not fit easily into the short news story with the punch lead. It often defies accurate definition in very short space. Very often it rebels against our passion for what is bright and brief.[48]

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[47] Roy Edward Lotz, Crime and the American Press (New York: Praeger, 1991) 54.

[48] Ralph Casy, ed., The Press in Perspective (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1963) 35.

While the stated objective of The New York Times is to be "to be the most comprehensive [newspaper],"[49] it is subject to the same inflexible dictates of the industry as its competition.

Although the above remarks are directed specifically at print journalism, they are applicable to all news media. There is, however, a significant difference between print and television coverage when it comes to distribution of national and international coverage. A content study of American newspapers by The Publishers Association found that the average newspaper devotes less than 25% of column space allocated for general news to international events. By contrast the average national newscast gives nearly 45% of broadcast time to international news, or normally between between ten and eleven minutes. Elite papers, such as The Chicago Tribune, The Daily News, The Los Angeles Sun Times and The New York Times, all reflect these statistics.[50] Still, The New York Times is considered "the nearest to a newspaper of record in the U.S."[51]

The problems facing journalists and novelists as described above are markedly similar. The inclusion of all events, all reality, all stories is impossible:

> A good newspaper will reward you only so far as you are devoted to reading it critically. The paper you read is shaped by unstated implicit values and biases which you must recognize. I admit that the mirrors we use to reflect reality are inevitably flawed by our own presumptions and prejudices. You must correct the "spin" those twists impart to what you read. The clues are there in all the subjective elements--phrasing, word

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[49] Talese 213.

[50] William C. Adams, "Covering the World in Ten Minutes," Television Coverage of International Affairs, ed. William C. Adams (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex, 1982) 4.

[51] "The Kingdom and the Cabbage" 73.

> selection, story placement, sourcing--that shape a particular reporter's or paper's version of the news.[52]

The goals of scope and objectivity are unrealized in both journalism and fiction. Johnson sees his novels as "eine Version der Wirklichkeit." This criteria is just as easily applied to The New York Times, when viewed as an independent text.

The narrative of Jahrestage is a convergence of many separate "texts." Among them are the dialogues between Gesine and her daughter, Gesine's recorded monologues, The New York Times items and other real and fabricated documentary materials. At the close of the novel Gesine turns over the finished manuscript to Dr. Kliefoth. The text is the product of her year-long collaboration with her narrative partner. But here the novel takes on an identity independent of the manuscript, as the scene with Dr. Kliefoth takes place outside the temporal parameters of the manuscript. In a later interview, Marie alludes to other tapes and letters she has never seen, which perhaps contain more personal elements deliberately omitted by Gesine:

> Die sind im Safe einer Anwaltskanzlei an der Park Avenue, und man gibt sie mir nicht vor dem 21. Juli 1973, und nur auf Verlangen. Im Fall, ich hätte Verlangen.[53]

The edition of The New York Times Gesine reads on her way to work, like all other "texts" in Jahrestage, undergoes a rigorous distillation process which mirrors the paper's own editing procedures. The items' form in which represents the final step in this process. Aside from the newspaper,

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[52] Broder, Behind the Front Page 366.

[53] Johnson, "Interview with Marie H. Cresspahl" 80.

there are other texts which are alluded to in the novel. Lisabeth and Gesine both kept diaries. Marie keeps a scrapbook of news photos. Then there are the numerous taped sessions which recount Gesine's childhood. There are also sources that are never specifically mentioned in the text, but which nonetheless appear in it. Such sources include Johnson's newspaper scrapbooks, items from Der Spiegel, Elizabeth Johnson's taped accounts of her childhood upon which Gesine's fictive experiences are based, and the archival sources for cited historical materials.

The novel's present-day narrative is dominated by The New York Times. The items which catch Gesine's attention begin and end many of the daily entries. They function as a transition to a larger reality, and influence Gesine's private life by providing an impetus for discussion and reflection. The issues of greatest interest to Gesine--Vietnam, urban crime and European affairs--are experienced almost exclusively through the newspaper, which can at best only provide "an awesomely minuscule window on the world."[54] While the rest of the world has a ringside view of the "television war" from their sofas, she limits herself to this single news source. Unlike the rest of middle-class New Yorkers, there is no television in the Cresspahl apartment. By depending almost exclusively on The New York Times, she forms a view of events patently different from mainstream America, which looked also--if not exclusively--to television for information.

Gesine's attitude toward The New York Times is tempered by her past. Her characterization of "Tante Times" reveals a profound skepticism of official channels of information that is a hallmark of post-war literature:

> . . . wie an eine Tante aus vornehmer Familie. . . . Gesine stellt sich Alter vor, eine hagere Figur, harte Falten im Gesicht, bittere Mundschwünge, allderdings dunkle und elegante Kleidung, Beharren auf

[54] Adams 4.

> hochgesteckte Frisuren, eine verkratzte Stimme, Lächeln nur in den Augenwinkeln. Nie Jähzorn. (I, 38)

This maiden aunt is not a member of mainstream society, but rather of the elite. She is also a member of the older generation, which in Germany were responsible for so much misinformation and censorship. Johnson and others of his generation had a first-hand understanding of how the public can be manipulated through media:

> Einige einfache Fehlerquellen bei der Herstellung und Übermittlung von Information sind bekannt: da haben die Augenzeugen nicht genau hingesehen, was sie nicht gesehen haben können sie nicht sagen. Sie erfinden etwas, was ihnen den Vorfall abzurunden scheint. Oder sie haben die Situation schlicht nach ihren gewohnten Bezugspunkten geordnet, die mögen privat sein oder von sektenhafter Moral oder parteipolitisch. Presse, Rundfunk, Fernsehen und Stadtgespräch verändern nochmals, was sie als bereits zubereitetes Material bekommen. (BS, 11)

As a veteran of the Nazi propaganda campaign, socialist indoctrination in the classroom, and the Allied-engineered "Wirtschaftswunder" in the West, Gesine displays a deep-seated distrust of the press. The manipulation and distortion of reality for political purposes by successive governments "sensitized the generation to which Johnson belonged in a special way to the dangers of taking at face value official pronouncements of the truth."[55]

Despite the drawbacks detailed above, the The New York Times' reputation for consistently thorough coverage cannot be overemphasized. It was the only U.S. paper to carry all of Hitler's speeches. In today's market there is no longer a need for this sort of reporting, since many speeches and governmental proceedings are available via C-SPAN and CNN, and even

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[55] van der Will 172.

the most obscure documents are available via the Internet. Perversely, the newspaper continues to publish full transcripts of most presidential press conferences.

As illustrated above, the stance of the New York Times is not neutral by any definition. The factors which determine the paper's political slant are numerous. Because of their different objectives and responsibilities journalistic and editorial practice are not necessarily identical. This split is identified in Jahrestage, where Gesine makes a clear distinction between report and opinion:

> In einem, in den Druckfehlern, zeigt sich die New York Times als die alte Dame, die sie ist. Heute spricht sie von einem "Worst Important Target," der Brücke Longbien bei Hanoi. Daß doch den Piloten die Hände so flattern wie der New York Times. (453)

Over time the New York Times' nationally influential editorial board has been consistently liberal. Through 1980, Democratic presidential candidates endorsed by the paper outnumbered Republican exactly eight to four. The reputation of the editorial page for being "sternly liberal and generally predictable" changed only with the appointment of John Oakes to senior editor in 1977.[56] But the track record of the editorial board aside, the paper has by all accounts maintained its political independence.

The latter half of the 1960s brought new challenges to The New York Times' status as a definitive news source. News weeklies such as Time, Newsweek, and U.S. Business and World Report were starting to establish themselves. The television news industry was also just gaining credence. More than any other factor, the Vietnam War made television news

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56 "The Kingdom and the Cabbage" 74.

coverage a daily staple in American life. The era marked the end of newspaper dominance of the information market.

Depending on whom you ask, the political position of The New York Times in the latter part of the Sixties could be characterized as independent or excessively liberal. To a large extent, evaluation of the paper's position is based on the contentious relationship between the paper and the Johnson administration, especially when it came to war news. The Nixon and Johnson administrations both regularly blasted the print and television media for negativism and anti-Americanism in their coverage of the war. The New York Times was a frequent target of administrative damage control. The rift between the paper and the White House began early in the Vietnam conflict. John Kennedy personally pressured the new Times publisher, Arthur Sulzenberger, who had been on the job only a few weeks, to remove reporter David Halberstam from the Saigon bureau. By the end of 1965 the paper had distanced itself from government policy:

> To the credit of the Times, when events at the end of 1965 indicated what the outcome of Johnson's policy would be, they reported the incongruities, inconsistencies, and incompetencies of U.S. policy and those involved long before most scholars and officials realized that the policy was on the rocks. All LBJ's horses and all of his men tried to make their Humpty-Dumpty policy whole. They conducted a massive effort at selling the war. The effort failed. The Times' reporters described a policy in pieces because it was in pieces.[57]

According to Nicholas O. Berry, this conflict between the administration and The New York Times is typical of what happens when foreign policy fails. In the early stages, the press generally complies as the mouthpiece of the administration:

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[57] Nicholas O. Berry, An Analysis of "The New York Times'" Coverage of U.S. Foreign Policy (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990) 28.

> To a far greater extent than with domestic politics, the press is at one with the foreign policy establishment. The press' main task is to inform its readers what the government wants foreign governments to do or not do, how the government intends to bring about that result, and what its early moves are. Its focus is on getting the facts. As a result, the government need only act in foreign policy and explain what it is doing in order to get its story out. . . . There is no need to manipulate the press if a policy's outcome is successful. Only failure or the imminence of failure activates the damage-control apparatus of the executive branch.[58]

Such is the case with the Vietnam conflict in 1967. From the beginning of Jahrestage the rift between the The New York Times and the Johnson administration is readily apparent.

Not everyone believed in The New York Times' self-professed objectivity in reporting and sociopolitical altruism. Leading the charge against the paper during the Vietnam War era was former New York Times reporter and political conservative Herman H. Dinsmore. In his diatribe against the paper leftist leanings, All the News that Fits. A Critical Analysis of the News and Editorial Contents of the New York Times (1969), Dinsmore holds the paper responsible for--among other things--ushering in the Cold War by advocating a "balance of power" policy with the Soviet Union, and propelling Fidel Castro to power by portraying him as the Cuban Abraham Lincoln and concealing his connection to the communist party.[59] He further accuses the paper's heavy-handed editorial staff of being overly critical of U.S. military actions, while at the same time turning a blind eye toward North Vietnamese atrocities. He devotes two

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[58] Berry xiii.

[59] Dinsmore 44.

chapters to the paper's stance on the war in Vietnam, which he deems just short of subversive:

> The Times has given vast amounts of space to the activities of the beatniks, the peaceniks, the draft-dodgers, the hell-raising monks who have encouraged self-immolation under burning gasoline, the news that the C.I.A. has helped American students as the Russians help theirs. The Times has done nothing to make the war in Vietnam popular or even tolerable . . . it has done much to denigrate the South Vietnamese. In brief, The New York Times has rebuffed the war in Vietnam--sought to make it unpopular and advocated on many occasions that the United States Government follow a course that has in the past led to the erection of Communist governments and the loss of countries to the free world.[60]

Comparing the headlines of The New York Herald Tribune and The New York Times on June 7, 1965, Dinsmore finds that only The Herald Tribune does justice to an article covering a battle between the Marines and the Viet Cong in headline and format. The former publishes the story in the two outside columns with the headline: "U.S. MARINES' GUNS SCORE A VIET VICTORY." The latter runs the story in the first inside column with a decidedly more pessimistic headline: "8 U.S. MARINES DIE AS 2 HELICOPTERS CRASH IN VIETNAM." He much prefers The Chicago Tribune's emotional patriotism, and continues: "There was no mention of victory by the Marines."[61] In hindsight, however, it is the factual, straightforward New York Times headline which stands the test of time.

In the novel, the framework created by The New York Times anchors the "imaginative events in the history of the times in which they

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[60] Dinsmore 58.

[61] Dinsmore 311.

occur" according to Fickert.[62] But it is a carefully constructed political landscape, rather than "background of the moral neutrality of public events"[63] he describes. The above discussion negates this pervasive view of Jahrestage. Johnson makes several references to the highly subjective version of contemporary events conveyed in Jahrestage.

In an interview with Manfred Durzak, Johnson emphasizes the subjective aspect of the articles included in the narrative:

> Was da vorkommt am Anfang, in der Mitte oder am Ende der Kapitel als Nachrichten aus der "New York Times," das ist nicht irgend etwas Objektives, sondern das ist etwas völlig auf das Subjekt dieser Mrs. Cresspahl Eingerichtetes, erstens durch die Auswahl: nur das, was nach ihrem Zustand und nach ihrer Entwicklung für sie von Interesse ist, kommt überhaupt vor, denn das hat sie nämlich genau gelesen. Das heißt: sie hat ungefähr 98% der "New York Times" nicht gelesen oder weggelassen als nicht erheblich. Aber zu den Sachen, die sie selber ausgesucht hat, die dann in der Welt passieren . . . dazu hat sie bestimmte emotionale und theoretische Reizreaktionen. Das ist ein Bestandteil ihres Lebens, das ist niemals eine erzählerische Konstruktion, als ob ich hier ein Medium eingeführt hätte. Das Medium ist Bestandteil dieses Tageslaufes und Lebenslaufes.[64]

Gesine's selection process is the natural extension of the paper's editing practice which evaluates, selects, places and shapes daily events. Obviously, the items that make it into the novel represent only a fraction of the day's news. If the paper itself cannot be considered an objective window on the world, Gesine's consciousness provides an even more prejudiced view.

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62 see Kurt Fickert, "Documenting the Novel" 13.

63 Fickert, "Documenting the Novel" 15.

64 Durzak, "Dieser langsame Weg zu einer größeren Genauigkeit" 442.

In almost all instances the news item as it appears in the narrative is a short paraphrase of the original article. It is important to remember that regardless of the form, the item is always a translation. There are no passages in the novel which quote The New York Times directly in English. Indeed, there are only a handful of items in the narrative which can be considered verbatim translations, the longest of which is Gesine's own laborious translation of the Prague Manifest (IV, 1437-46). Interestingly enough, it is not copyrighted. These passages range from weather reports to articles on acts of violence which in the text are followed with a copyright notice. Weather reports are the most common. The statistical rendition of reality contained in such passages--temperature, humidity, precipitation, cloud cover--is a matter of record. There is only one single version of events which are undisputable and historically verifiable--either it rained or it did not. Similarly, in his role as "Genosse Schriftsteller" Johnson easily looks up weather data needed for Gesine's historical narrative. The January 5 entry consists primarily of copyrighted material, including a numerical tally of losses for the week and the previous year in Vietnam (not copyrighted), results of a ninety minute battle near Saigon, a notice of American weapons sales abroad, and the sentencing of black activist writer LeRoi Jones (II, 552-4). The entry gives the impression that the reader is privy to the same information that Gesine is. However, the first item is not cited in its entirety and the second is apparently from the "Daily News Summary and Index." Whereas the other two items are only one paragraph in length, the LeRoi Jones article takes up over two pages. The article is not quoted in its entirety. Gesine apparently skips a portion, and notes in her abridged version, ". . . will be filed" (II, 554).

In general, the New York Times items are much more sophisticated in translation, content and form. Its final narrative forms is Johnson's own interpretive translation, although they are tentatively credited to Gesine in the text. In numerous instances Johnson's scrapbooks, which contain the original articles, show his translation notes in the margins. These are later incorporated verbatim into the narrative. In all aspects, the version of reality which emerges in Jahrestage in the guise of The New York Times is a highly distilled version one. Although it is based on a single documentary source, the material is subject to the filters of selection, paraphrase, translation and transposition. The newspaper, as it is utilized in the novel, maps the interior landscape of Gesine's psyche at the same time it discloses the sociopolitical terrain of the late 1960s

As a practical matter, large parts of The New York Times fall by the wayside on a daily basis. It is in this respect that Johnson's narrative agenda is the inverse of the newspaper's. The focus of "Tante Times" is on events of national and international consequence. Articles on individuals are limited to the "movers and shakers" of public life. Other items--such as those reporting death, violent crime and trial proceedings--become newsworthy only because they are unusual and/or sensational. While it is important to report "All the News Fit to Print," it is equally important to sell papers.

With regularity Johnson highlights seemingly minor incidents and the individuals affected. Often they are the victims of violent crime, whose duly reported story is buried deep in Section 1. Johnson's interest in "die einfachen Leute" is a consistent theme in his fiction. It plays an especially pivotal role in the dynamic between The New York Times and the fictional narrative in Jahrestage. As D.E. Bond points out, it is the "little people" like

Gesine "who bear the brunt of history's catastrophes."[65] She, along with family, friends and acquaintances, are the most profoundly affected by the forces of politics, history and nature.

In his detailed and well-argued analysis, Bond plumbs the intricacies of Johnson's role as historian and chronicler in Jahrestage. In his role as "Genosse Schriftsteller," who links the personal and historical narrative strands, Johnson blurs the distinction between fiction and historiography. While on the surface Jahrestage exhibits conventional narrative elements such as characters and plot line, it is in fact a compilation of loosely linked documentary materials and episodes plugged into the novel's rigid chronological structure:

> Jahrestage is teeming with self-contained stories from history, in which the experiences of its major characters and countless minor ones relativize and complement traditional historiography as a series of famous dates. Johnson's concern with writing the novel as history leads him to the remarkable formal achievement of Jahrestage. On the one hand, by concentrating on Gesine Cresspahl and the fate that may await her in Prague, he retains much of the scheme of the traditional novel based on the paradigmatic nature of the conflict between one individual's ideals and social realities. On the other hand Jahrestage appears to reject this form entirely since its narrative is composed of a seemingly infinite number of different perspectives and voices through which the history of an epoch is told.[66]

Each episode is self-contained and exhibits a multitude of links to past and present experience, which provides a springboard for reflection or further investigation. This "spin-off" principle is illustrated in numerous

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[65] D.E. Bond, "Two Ships: Correspondences Between Uwe Johnson and Johann Peter Hebel," German Quarterly 64 (1991): 319.

[66] Bond, "Two Ships: Correspondences Between Uwe Johnson and Johann Peter Hebel" 318.

instances by Gesine, Marie, as well as the narrator himself, and mirrors the hoped-for effect on the reader.

Gesine's story unfolds within a series of narrative frameworks which unify the structural and thematic aspects of Jahrestage. The novel opens and closes with a scene on the shore, which are separate from the body of the narrative. These two scenes place Gesine and her story in a larger historical context. The other narrative frames are provided by the diary structure and The New York Times. Both the diary structure and the shore scenes are confined to the present, while The New York Times functions as the bridge between contemporary events and Gesine's reconstruction of the past. It reinforces Gesine's calendar-bound progression through the year, and is an integral part of the diary structure itself.

While The New York Times is intimately linked to Gesine's reconstructive and reevaluative process, it is most importantly the concrete manifestation of the modern-day sociopolitical reality with which Gesine must either come to terms or reject. The positioning of newspaper items in the narrative points to their importance. Their proximity in the text to the historical narrative initiates a continuous friction between the two narrative strands. However, the relationship between the past and present is rarely stated. The link--if apparent at all in the narrative--is at best loosely associative. The primary link is through Gesine who is simultaneously the subject and object on both levels. The confrontational relationship between past and present is further reinforced by thematic groups which appear in both narrative strands.

It is important at this point to distinguish between the visual and thematic relationship of various items in their original newspaper format

and their new context within the narrative itself. Like the original editor, Gesine's views and interests affect her selection, placement and portrayal of news:

> It may be argued that page one is more important than page seven or twelve. Keep in mind, however, issues are picked in which the administration dominates page one in order to show that its doing so does not influence and thus dominate the whole newspaper. This is to demonstrate that, although what U.S. officials say and do is news, the description of what else is going on is news, too, and treated independently.[67]

Once the item is removed from the original context of competing stories or side-bar articles, and is placed in its new context, the significance and slant can--and often does--change significantly. Differences in editorial viewpoint account for differences in front-page content from paper to paper. Another factor is the role of translation, and differences both subtle and overt between the narrative and its source. Gesine's viewpoint, as exhibited in the seemingly minute editorial and translation decisions she makes on a regular basis, is an integral aspect of the narrative. Gesine's "daily chronicle of world events" is even further impacted by her own limited interests.

There are certain topics which regularly, and somewhat predictably, catch Gesine's eye, all of which are logical in context of her personal experience and current environment. Events in Europe, New York City, and Vietnam as well as those which come under the aegis of socialism loosely define her areas of interest. Her attention to some items stems from her personal history. Items documenting the resurgence of the Neo-Nazis in the Federal Republic, former Nazis in government, and the continuing

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[67] Berry 45.

war trials reinforce the necessity of Gesine's confrontation with the past. At the same time West Germany's failure on a national political level to come to terms with National Socialism and its atrocities, lends credence to Gesine's own lack of political involvement. In general, articles on Europe--especially those dealing with the Prague Spring, Cold War tensions or seemingly minor confrontations between individual and government within the Eastern Block--are frequently incorporated in the narrative regardless of their length or placement in the paper itself.

A second area of interest are those articles documenting issues affecting her immediate environment. This includes such serious topics as urban crime, racial tensions and the justice system as well as metropolitan minutia from subway construction to garbage strikes. Still other articles capture cataclysmic national events such as the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Senator Robert Kennedy.

In his study, Uwe Johnson's "Jahrestage," Ulrich Fries has already undertaken a detailed analysis of the novel's first four chapters (or days). Of overriding importance are the complex relationships between the narrator and Gesine and between content and structure as established in these first eighteen pages. While his well-argued analysis is exceedingly thorough, he does not in any detail address the role of The New York Times in the novel's exposition.

The first and final days of Jahrestage lie outside the rigidly proscribed calendar structure of the narrative. Each entry is clearly defined along the chronological continuum. They are visual cues for the diary structure of the novel, and the only consistent aspect of the narrative. The calendar aspect of the narrative is further reinforced by frequent references to weather, holidays and seasons within the text itself. In some

chapters it is the only discernible link to the present day narrative. The header and Gesine's italicized internal monologues are distinct from the body of the narrative. Not only do they occupy a separate line, but the type is smaller. Therefore, I would argue with a seeming minor point made by Ulrich Fries in his analysis of the date header, as it has misleading implications for Gesine's narrative standpoint in relation to the New York Times items. Fries characterizes the date formula, which remains consistent throughout the novel, as "eine Mischung aus deutscher und amerikanischer Gewohnheit, das Datum anzuzeigen."[68] He reasons, "bei fortdauernder Lektüre nimmt die Auffassung an Plausibiltät zu, Johnson habe sich auch diese Gelegenheit nicht entgehen lassen, Gesines Stellung zwischen den Kulturen, ihre Identitätsproblematik anzudeuten."[69] This description of the dateline is as inaccurate as his characterization of Gesine between two cultures.

The header is distinctly un-American in style, and makes no concessions to this opposing "Kultur" in order or in language. The placement of the date on the left is more typical of letter than a diary entry. The heading does not blend cultural styles, but rather transposes the New York Times header into a European format. The original newspaper datebar unvaryingly reads something similar to "New York, Thursday, February 1, 1968." Interestingly, once the paper is folded into fourths--as Gesine invariably does on her way to work--"New York" is no longer visible. The chapter heading is often directly followed by paraphrased material, or occasionally direct citations (with copyright), from the newspaper. The heading's transposition is analogous to the paper's as Gesine skims the

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[68] Fries 38.

[69] Fries 39.

date and moves down the front page. The automatic transposition of the header into a familiar format is the initial step of the transition.

It is problematic to attribute the heading solely to Gesine. However, there are two types of headers: the type described above and those with some sort of holiday or event attached. Addenda to the header are, with a few noteworthy exceptions, not incorporated into the text proper. "Kolumbustag," "Groundhog Day," "Karfreitag," "Veteranentag," "Father's Day" are all found on standard calendars and would have little significance for Gesine, except as perhaps an extra holiday. These headers could be attributed to either Gesine or possibly the narrator, who imposes the narrative structure. Regardless of the narrative viewpoint, there are multiple historical and fictional calendars of equal validity at work in the text. For example, there is a significant difference from the normal tags which seem to come right off the calendar and the headings having clearly personal meaning: "Tag der South Ferry," or, once even in English, "South Ferry Day" (IV, 1594). On one Saturday the header flows into the body of the text, eliminating the separation between the rigid chronology of the calendar, the weather news report and Gesine's subjective experience.[70] If anything, rather than showing Gesine as between two cultures, the passage underscores Gesine's distance from her American experience as everything is "reinterpreted" European style. Other examples are two letters to Dr. Kliefoth and "Rote Anita." The latter, placed entirely in

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[70] 18. November, 1967 Sonnabend, Tag der South Ferry,
vielleicht der letzte in diesem Jahr. Denn gestern nacht zog der zweite Schneesturm binnen einer Woche durch den Staat New York und Neuengland. . . . Noch immer zieht Gesine davon 32 ab, nimmt den Rest mit 5 mal und teilt ihn durch 9, so daß sie mit ihren 6° Celsius zu dem gleichen Ergebnis gelangt wie Marie, die seit jeher 42 Grad Fahrenheit hat in eine Empfindung übersetzen können: Es ist kalt. (I, 311)

quotation marks, is written by Marie. The last eye-catching example is the heading "Purim" on March 13 (II, 862).

D.E. Bond's refreshing simple and eminently sensical analysis of the interrelationship between date and text in the text of Jahrestage points out multiple elements taken from the *Kalendergeschichte* tradition. He characterizes the novel as a "contemporary continuation" of the genre. Hallmarks of the *Kalendergeschichte*, such as the formal structure, an incorporation of multi-media, the "personalized calendarist as teacher figure,"[71] self-contained episodes with didactic leanings are all present in the novel[72]:

> . . . for Johnson the principle of following the dates of the calendar has become a principle of creating a calendar according to the events and anniversaries of German and world history in this century as well as according to the seasons and weather in New York and the dates of American public holidays and Jewish religious ones, to mention only some of the startling features of the calendar in Jahrestage.[73]

By drawing on this tradition the novel's structure reinforces a "non-individualistic, 'epic' tendency"[74] already inherent in the text through the narrative's vast historical scope and use of The New York Times. Bond continues:

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[71] Bond, "Two Ships: Correspondences Between Uwe Johnson and Johann Peter Hebel," 316.

[72] See Bond "Two Ships: Correspondences Between Uwe Johnson and Johann Peter Hebel" 313-324.

[73] Bond, "Two Ships: Correspondences Between Uwe Johnson and Johann Peter Hebel," 315.

[74] Bond, "Two Ships: Correspondences Between Uwe Johnson and Johann Peter Hebel," 316.

> Jahrestage--like the Schatzkästlein and like Brecht's Kalendergeschichten--can be viewed as a series of independent and edifying tales instead of as merely a novel in which conventional plot and character structures create interest. Here the model of the household calendar appears particularly relevant to Johnson's work, so that the latter need not be the object of a contemplative armchair read but a book with a distinct use-value--not unlike a reference work--to be read in parts, as a series of episodes each of which may be returned to at will. This provokes the reader to be active, not only in searching for the links between the parts but also in taking a particular tale, chapter, or anniversary as the starting point for a more far-reaching investigation.[75]

To characterize Jahrestage as a *Kalendergeschichte* of epic proportions, which works quite convincingly for Bond, is limiting in context of this analysis. However, the discussion of the novel as a *Kalendergeschichte* neatly solves certain questions regarding structure.

The structural and thematic significance of The New York Times is quickly apparent in the novel. News items are injected into the text almost immediately. Even the first few pages, which lay outside the structure of the novel "proper," mention the New Haven riots and tensions on the Israeli-Jordianian Front. Gesine's plunge into contemporary events is immediate and abrupt. There is a distinct contrast between the timeless, lyrical quality of this preceding section and the gritty reality of the city. Only in the last paragraph does the idyllic seashore give way to New York's rush and bustle, as Gesine and Marie board the train:

> . . . und sie steht schon lange in der Reihe der Wochenendurlauber und Tagesurlauber im Mittelgang gelegentlich um einen halben Fuß vortretend, angetreten zum Rennen auf die Wagentür, die Rolltreppe, die verwinkelten Bauverschalungen des Pennsylvania Bahnhofs, in die Westseitenlinie der

[75] Bond, "Two Ships: Correspondences Between Uwe Johnson and Johann Peter Hebel," 315.

> Ubahn, in die Linie nach Flushing, auf die Rolltreppe aus dem blauen Gewölbe auf die Ecke der Zweiundvierzigsten Straße am Bahnhof Grand Central. Später als eine Stunde darf sie nicht an ihren Arbeitstisch kommen, und eine Stunde zu spät nur heute, nach dem Urlaub. (I,10)

It is clear as Gesine heads for work that she is a creature of habit. Every day she takes the same route into the city. She is caught up in the hurrying swell of humanity on the city sidewalks, and controlled by the rhythmic changes of the traffic lights. She crosses against the lights like any self-respecting New York pedestrian:

> Sie hat nicht gezögert, auf die Verbotsschrift zuzutreten. Sie kommt hier seit vordenklicher Zeit, mit angelegten Ellenbogen, auf den Takt der Nachbarn bedacht. (I, 11)

Neither her surroundings nor even the day unfolding before her rouses her curiosity. Her mind is elsewhere as she moves ahead like an automaton. The day is hardly begun and mentally she is already thinking about going home: "Sie geht noch zu langsam, ihr Blick wandert, sie ist mit der Rückkehr beschäftigt" (I, 11). The surroundings are familiar and unremarkable. She adroitly avoids a blind beggar, "der unwillig grunzt"--another familiar part of the landscape--whose presence is remarkable only in that "sie hat ihn schon wieder nicht verstanden" (I,11). There is no interaction with the people around her or even eye contact. Her gaze is fixed on "den blendenden Zement" (I, 11). The route and routine she has followed "seit vordenklicher Zeit" (I, 11) places her in a landscape which she is physically part of, but emotionally and psychologically alienated from. Gesine is cognizant of the other passersby only in their reflection in the black marble of the building "deren Spiegel die Farben der Gesichter, Blecklacke, Baldachine, Hemden, Schaufenster, Kleider schwächer tönt."

(I, 11) It is a landscape empty of color. The street still lies in early morning shadow. The red and green of the traffic lights are supplied by memory, not visual stimulus.

Fries suggests that upon Gesine's return from vacation, she has somehow lost touch with day-to-day New York reality, pointing to "die infernalischen Züge"--rather like Dante's descent into hell--exhibited by the city on her way to work.[76] His characterization is of an oppressive city which is the embodiment of an "unnatürlicher, entfremdeter Alltag der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft, deren Gesetze das Leben der Stadt bestimmen."[77] The problem with this interpretation, undoubtedly colored by later passages, is that it is entirely premature. At this point in the narrative we know nothing of Gesine's job at the bank, or her attitude towards New York. In fact we know very little of Gesine herself--only that her sense of alienation is an integral part of her whether on vacation or in the city. This perpetual alienation is the cornerstone of her psyche and it later becomes apparent that it has come to play in most of her major decisions. In fact, Gesine slips quite easily back into her normal routine. Nothing has changed in her absence. On the surface her absence has made no difference at all. The timeless quality of the newspaper articles and the street scene undermine any sense that the first day of "Tageserzählung" is any different or that anything has changed, despite the notation of a specific date.

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[76] Fries 40.

[77] Fries 41.

CHAPTER 6
"DEN KRIEG, DEN KEINER WILL": GESINE AND THE VIETNAM WAR

The spectrum of subjects which figure consistently during the first week of the novel's calendar narrative is quite narrow: the Vietnam War, racial conflict and violence in American society. Gesine's outrage over the series on Svetlana Stalin is introduced at the end of the week, which in turn becomes the dominant issue of the following week. Following this general pattern, Gesine's news interests expand gradually and systematically.

There are only a handful of issues which regularly garner her attention. The thematic focus of newspaper items established in the exposition remains consistent throughout Jahrestage. There are some intervening issues which briefly spark her interest: a city-wide garbage strike, conflicts in the Third World, and Hans Magnus Enzensberger's letter to the editor in the New York Times Review of Books, "Über das Verlassen Amerikas." But the disappearance of these items from both the front page and the narrative are roughly concurrent. As a whole, war and subjugation through violence are the novel's overriding issues. Gesine's childhood is irrevocably scarred by National Socialism and the Second World War. Her idealistic commitment to socialism is stifled by a repressive East German government. The threat of Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia hangs over the novel as a whole. While there are several

thematic threads which Gesine follows throughout the calendar year, more often than not the first item in the paper to catch her eye is the latest war news. The Vietnam War, as reflected by the headlines and the information's unvarying high profile position on the front page of The New York Times, is the dominant issue of the era.

The Johnson administration's official policy in Vietnam was to wage "a war of attrition and punishment" against the North.[1] To avoid provoking the Chinese there were no plans for invasion or the bombing of anything other than military targets. However, within these parameters "the punishment was unlimited."[2] The administration sought to prevent any widening of the war, while at the same time forcing the North to the conference table in order to bring about an end to the punishing air war. President Lyndon B. Johnson assured national and international audiences: "We will not be defeated. We will not grow tired. We will not withdraw." [3] His administration, it seemed, was prepared to wait it out. Otherwise, U.S. policy in Southeast Asia was unclear, if not downright misleading. Public opinion on the war effort was also somewhat contradictory:

> Escalation became the preference of most Americans, while withdrawal sentiment dropped off to very small proportions. It may be that the American people accepted the idea that there was a need for American participation in the Vietnamese war, but most felt that our efforts were not sufficiently vigorous to bring it to a rapid conclusion. It was during this period that the highest level of American troop concentration was reached. Doubt and anxiety about this role in Southeast Asia are reflected in a continuing slide in support

[1] Berry 32.

[2] Berry 31.

[3] Berry 31.

> figures. . . . By the middle of 1967, when escalation sentiment was at its highest point, the number of citizens who supported our involvement in Vietnam (by responding that the war was *not* a mistake [in the Gallup poll]) dropped permanently under 50 percent. During this period, nevertheless, the typical response of the well-known man in the street was to call for more military effort.[4]

The year 1967, although it marked a transition both in terms of the level of U.S. involvement and public support, was "the year of the hawk" according to Lunch and Sperlich, who base their conclusions on national polls.

Often Gesine's day begins with a summary of the war action, reflecting the information's placement in the right outside column, reserved for the lead article. In the course of a year, Gesine registers a wide range of events and topics. But for the most part, the content of the New York Times items cited regularly in Jahrestage fall neatly within an agenda of interest established in the narrative's exposition. Information on the war included in subsequent newspaper passages falls into the four basic types addressed in the first seven dated entries: body counts, battle summaries, policy news and photos.

The structure of the entry reflects somewhat the newspaper's actual format, as is the case for much of the first week. The dominant factor in the composition of news passages, however, is Gesine's personal agenda. When it comes to Vietnam, Gesine's personal interests coincide with the paper's priorities, unlike other issues such as the Prague Spring and ongoing Nazi war crimes trials. These are more often found on the interior pages of the A section. With very few exceptions war news is usually located in the upper outside column. This is where Gesine habitually

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[4] Lunch and Sperlich 30.

begins her daily perusal of The New York Times: "Am Bahnsteig faltet sie das Blatt einmal und noch einmal längs, damit sie es im Gedränge durch die Ubahntür behält und in der Enge zwischen Ellbogen und Schultern die erste Seite des achtspaltigen Stabs von oben bis unten lesen kann. . . ." (I, 14). But the account of Gesine's reading pattern, along with the implicated character of the news passages, is at odds with the content of the passages themselves. The spectrum of topics, embellished with few details, are read like headlines. Descriptions of first page photos further emphasize the stream-of-consciousness illusion. Gesine's first impression is derived from the headlines: ". . . sie versucht die Titelzeilen der New York Times zu lesen, wenn sie die Zeitung unter dem Gewicht hervorzupft" (I, 14). Although the cited events are often those that dominate the day's paper, the items that Gesine includes in the narrative are rarely taken from the lead paragraphs. Items which Gesine chooses to highlight are quite different from the paper's priorities.

From the very first line of the narrative's first dated entry, "Aufklärendes Wetter in Nordvietnam erlaubte der Luftwaffe Angriffe nördlich von Hanoi" (I, 11), the topic of Vietnam is rarely absent for more than a day or two at a stretch in the first three volumes. After its thematic importance is well established in the first few weeks, the frequency of Vietnam War items from The New York Times falls somewhat as the information becomes repetitive. They are often devoid of content as to be meaningless. These aspects of war reporting are ones that Johnson criticizes in Jahrestage: "Die New York Times nennt heute die Namen der amtlich in Viet Nam getöteten Soldaten aus New York und Umgebung, aber sie gibt nicht an, wieviele aus dem ganzen Lande gefallen sind" (I, 393). Vietnam war coverage does not equal this initial intensity until the

Tet Offensive early in the spring of 1968, when Gesine--along with the rest of America--is shocked out of her complacency. Between these two periods of intense coverage the war forms a regular, rhythmic component of narrative structure.

For the most part the newspaper items in the first few entries address the same subjects. Despite this similarity there are some subtle, but marked differences which are key to understanding the narrative. The rest of the analysis of the Vietnam War's role in Jahrestage will target three key structural points: the exposition, the Tet Offensive and the war's changed role in the novel's final volume.

The dateline and the news items emphasize the narrative's connection to a specific date and year in the first paragraph. The structure of Day One is typical of that which is carried through the text for the next calendar year. The first entry in the diary begins with a typical header, "21. August, 1967 Montag," followed by two front page news items from The New York Times:

> Aufklärendes Wetter in Nordvietnam erlaubte der Luftwaffe Angriffe nördlich von Hanoi. Die Marine bombardierte die Küste mit Flugzeugen und feuerte Achtzollgranaten in die entmilitarisierte Zone. Im Süden wurden vier Hubschrauber abgeschossen. Die Unruhen in New Haven gingen gestern weiter mit Bränden, eingeschlagenen Schaufenster, Plünderung; weitere 112 Personen sind festgenommen. (I, 11)

It is not immediately apparent from the text itself that The New York Times is the source of this information. If anything at all is known about Jahrestage, it is Gesine's compulsive reading of the paper. It is not until the next day that the nature and extent of Gesine's obsession with The New York Times is described in detail. Initially it is the issues which are at the

forefront of the narrative, rather than the nature of the source. These issues are fundamental to the thematic thrust of the novel, and relay a great deal of information about Gesine herself.

Another issue that needs further clarification before continuing with the New York Times analysis is the essence of the items themselves. A prevalent--and incorrect--assumption by many critics is that Johnson simply translates and cites the original material. On the contrary, the use of the newspaper items is anything but straightforward. An examination of items from August 21 will demonstrate that Johnson, in his role as narrator, did not just copy items from the paper. Instead he deliberately crafted them into integral narrative components, which establish both the structure and thematic content of the novel. Individual elements, word choice and omissions color Gesine's interpretations of events. Often items which are presented as seamless units of information are actually taken from different articles in different sections in a process hidden from the reader. The position and length of the article in context of the paper also reveals a great deal about Gesine's interests and priorities. Omitted information is also significant in some cases. All of these factors combine to bring about a very specific version of the day's events. Far from being a shorthand for contemporary sociopolitical reality, the New York Times items reveal as much--if not more--about Gesine as they do about New York and America in the late Sixties.

To establish the transformation of the New York Times items, it is imperative to return to the original daily edition. All three topics (i.e. Vietnam, the New Haven riots, and Charles Jordan) appear on the front page. Their placement in the text reflects the hierarchy of importance established by their position in the front-page format. The lead Vietnam

article appears in column 8, the outside column reserved for the day's most important story. The other items follow on the front page from right to left and down. The articles are more or less adjacent to each other on the page. Gesine's perusal of the paper follows the format's established priorities, as intended by the editor. Only the article on Charles Jordan, which differs significantly from the other items in how it is transposed into the text of Jahrestage, is from the bottom half (i.e. the third of four "panels"). Deemed less important are the articles on the page perimeter, such as those reporting a student anti-draft demonstration and new links between smoking and disease, and which are ignored by Gesine. The only other international items note escalating tensions between the British and Chinese governments and coming democratic elections in South Vietnam, which are incorporated into the narrative later in the week.

The two items with which the supposed "contract" between Gesine and Johnson begins are presented plainly and concisely. The resulting impression is deceptively straightforward. A closer analysis of the paper demonstrates how Johnson achieves this. The impression is one of skimming or browsing articles and/or headlines. This is as misleading as it is deliberate. Johnson displays his typical *modus operandi* in his use of The New York Times information, which raises some interesting aspects regarding the material's presentation--if not outright manipulation.

The first sentence is an almost literal translation of the lead statement in the paper's infamous column eight.[5] An examination of the

[5] The combination of placement with an especially striking photo can speak volumes, as on November 15, 1967, when the front page is dominated by news of a student antiwar demonstration: "Den 3000 Jugendliche, die gestern abend um das Hotel Hilton herum gegen die Fortsetzung des amerikanischen Krieges in Viet Nam protestierten, hat die New York Times nicht nur ein Foto von 35 Quadratzoll unter dem eigenen Kopf gewidmet, auch die berühmte Spalte 8" (I, 296).

original article reveals two telling changes in the transposition of material from paper to text. The article's lead-off actually reads: "Clearing weather in the North permitted American pilots to attack targets near Hanoi yesterday for the first time in a week."[6] Johnson's emphasis is different in two noticeable instances. While he adheres to the grammatical structure of the opening, all references to time are omitted.

The article itself emphasizes the week's lull in both the headline and the lead sentence. Its placement shows that it is the most newsworthy item of information. Instead of stressing the resumption of activity after a significant break, the novel instead starts with a process already underway where clearing skies are the only distinguishing characteristic. This is in direct contrast to the article itself, which stresses in the headline the resumption of bombing after six days, and is repeated almost verbatim in the lead sentence. Johnson's translation emphasizes instead a change in weather, enabling the continuation of the status quo. Weather and weather reports are common in Jahrestage, and in this instance the weather reference takes on a particularly sinister role. Ironically, clear skies are an invitation to destruction. A second similar phrase exactly one week later on August 27, "Und das Wetter in Nordvietnam war wieder gut genug für Bombenangriffe" (I, 29), reinforces this initial impression of unrelenting American opportunism.

There is another telling manipulation of the original material in the opening passage. The phrase "near Hanoi" becomes "nördlich von Hanoi" in the text. These changes have a significant impact on how the information is perceived by substituting vague generalities for the specifics

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[6] "U.S. Jets Attack Near Hanoi Again After Week Lull," New York Times, 21 Aug. 1967: 1.

detailed in the original article. The substitution of "nördlich" for "near" emphasizes the incursion into North Vietnam, rather than the perception conveyed by the paper that the bombings were restricted to military targets around the capitol.

The Vietnam items are a loose summary, condensing a wide range of actions into three succinct lines. The next two sentences incorporate information from different articles. Bombing raids on the coast and "Achtzollgranaten" in the demilitarized zone are linked by a coordinating conjunction, which in the newspaper represents a spring of five pages. The fact that four helicopters had been shot down in the South is first mentioned on page three. There is no mention of casualties in the narrative, in contrast to the actual articles. The first sentences show the Americans on the offense with bombing incursions into the demilitarized zone. The impression is of an offensive along the coast and in an area stretching from north of Hanoi south to the demilitarized zone, with only the loss of four choppers. Such summarization and cross-referencing belies the impression of a quick read on the way to work. The placement is not the result of stream-of-consciousness style narration, but a deliberate and thoughtful collage of material.[7]

All in all, the impression conveyed by these three lines on Vietnam is in keeping with the prevailing American perception of the war. Despite the different arenas in which the action takes place, the government press releases--dutifully reported in the national news--imparted an overall

[7] Since all topically related articles are pasted together in Johnson's scrapbooks, links between items are easy enough to follow. This process is solely the arena of Johnson as narrator, and not Gesine as reader, since this secondary text is not a part of her character. This undermines the assumption that the New York Times articles are simple manifestations of--or windows into--her consciousness. It also raises some questions as to the line of demarcations between Johnson as narrator and his subject.

picture of military progress. After the Tet Offensive, however, it became clear that the war was being conducted in widely separate, isolated areas. This change in national perception of the war also marks a significant turning point in the narrative. In the spring of 1968, the frequency of war related items from The New York Times in the novel falls off noticeably, reflecting the trend in coverage in the paper itself.

Initially, Johnson makes no mention of casualties in his introduction of the Vietnam theme. This aspect of the war is incorporated very carefully a few days later. But his initial portrayal of the Vietnam War is general but forceful. The action as depicted in the text belies the newspaper's appraisal of the action: ". . . ground action remained light, with no significant contacts reported."[8]

In the text war news is followed by mention of racial riots in New Haven. Johnson's language is much more general and considerably less evocative than the original, bordering on the euphemistic, compared to the original article's lead sentence: "Racial disorders flared here again last night. . . ."[9] There is no further mention of "Bürger afrikanischer Abstammung" from the opening section. Again references to time are blurred as the riots "gingen gestern weiter." Johnson's interpretation lends a timeless quality, and obscures the fact that this particular incident lasted only two days.[10] Here the absence of temporal parameters is similar to the narrative in the undated exposition: "In New Haven sollen Bürger afrikanischer Abstammung Schaufenster einschlagen und Brandbomben

[8] New York Times, 21 Aug. 1967: 1.

[9] "New Haven Arrests 112 in 2nd Night of Disorders," New York Times, 21 Aug. 1967: 1.

[10] Johnson's notebook also includes another related article, "New Haven Riots Hit Model City."

werfen." Even the added information from the previous section gives no indication that this is the second night. Like the Vietnam items there is no indication of a beginning or an end to the riots. The number arrested, which is taken from the headline, comes almost as an afterthought. The use of "weitere" also serves to emphasis the sense of continuity.

The next news item from The New York Times does not immediately follow the opening items discussed above. Johnson places an intervening scene. Gesine goes to pay for her paper, dropping the coins in the bowl. Before she can do so the untrusting, street-smart kiosk merchant shoves out a twisted hand: "Der Mann blickt feindselig" (I, 11). He seems the very embodiment of the tough struggle on the city's "mean streets" as he scrapes for every coin. This short scene showcases Gesine's first personal contact in the novel. Though brief, it conveys a pointed, far from positive impression of the city and its inhabitants. Just about every stereotype about New York City is packed into a few sentences.

In contrast to the opening paragraph of August 21, the item on Charles Jordan's death is comparatively full of detail, covering four of the five basics of journalism: who, what, where, when. The cause of death, however, remains unanswered. There is also no speculation as to motive. The suspicion he was murdered is not mentioned, although the probability is clearly implied:

> Die Leiche jenes Amerikaners, der am vorigen Mittwochabend in Prag nicht in sein Hotel zurückkam, ist gestern nachmittag in der Vltava gefunden worden. Mr. Jordan, 59 Jahre, war Mitarbeiter des jüdischen Hilfswerks JOINT. Er hatte sich eine Zeitung kaufen wollen. (I, 11)

Of all the "real-time" issues so far included in the narrative, this is the only one which represents a departure from the status quo. While Vietnam and racial unrest are long-standing issues, missing Americans are not normally fished out of the river in Prague. Charles Jordan's suspicious death underscores an atmosphere of uncertainty and turbulence in Prague. It is also the only human interest story in the opening section of the novel. Here, the fate of an individual is given equal, if not preferential, treatment and placement in the narrative. Gesine follows the Jordan murder story as it develops over several days. This incident is clearly important to her, although its significance remains unclear in the initial stages of the novel.

The inclusion of Mr. Jordan's death in Jahrestage is interesting for several reasons. It clearly establishes Prague as a central theme, along with the Vietnam War, racism and violence. It seems ironic that the first mention of Prague, which comes to embody Gesine's hopes for the future of European socialism as well as her own, is a negative one. Whether or not the article is simply another "Zufallsfund" for Johnson, Fries points to the implications the it has for the text. The Jordan incident later becomes significant as Gesine becomes involved in De Rosny's plan to extend credit to the Czechoslovakian government. It also introduces "auf eine befremdliche Art die Topoi >Zeitung<, >Juden<, >Verbrechen< und (über den Ort) >Sozialismus< miteinander verschränkend."[11] Johnson's other "Zufallsfund," the violent Soviet put-down of the Czech insurrection on August 21, hangs over the novel like an ominous cloud.

A comparison between the original New York Times articles and the corresponding facts mentioned in the narrative unearth some interesting inclusions and omissions. The narrative seems to include all of the salient

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[11] Fries 39.

details. The article's most telling aspect is the radical difference in presentation between it and the two opening items. While both lead sentences mirror their sources almost exactly, the Jordan incident is recounted very differently. It is a much more comprehensive summary of the original article. Unlike the others, it is more a paraphrase than a translation. The others consist of fragments of information collected as Gesine skims the paper. All elements are loosely related, and are presented cohesively, although an examination of the original Jordan article reveals again how Johnson manipulates his source in order to create a specific impression: "A body identified as that of Charles H. Jordan, an American official of a Jewish relief organization was found today in the Vltav River in Prague."[12] The narrative indicates again that Gesine has again been following this particular story , as she refers to "die Leiche jenes Amerikaners." She also incorporates elements from different paragraphs in this short summary. The irony that he disappears while fetching a newspaper is obviously not lost on her, even though this piece of information abruptly ends the flow of the narrative.

There are also some striking omissions on Gesine's part. Jordan was not just a JOINT "Mitarbeiter," he was the executive vice chairman and director general. According to the article, he was on vacation with his wife and nephew and had been missing for several days. He disappeared the evening before they were to depart for Israel. There is no overt reference in the paragraph to the anti-Semitism, discussed at length in the New York Times article as a possible reason for his murder. There is a possible link to the June Arab-Israeli war, whose brief mention in the text's

12 "Body of American Missing Prague Is Found in River," New York Times, 21 Aug. 1967: 1.

introductory section now makes some sense, although the connection is not immediately apparent to the reader: "An der israelisch-jordanischen Front ist wieder geschossen worden" (I, 9).

With benefit of hindsight it is easy to assume that Gesine's initial interest in Jordan's fate is a personal one, as justified by her interest in Prague which emerges later in the novel. In addition, the comparison between the original and the paraphrase, bring to light the hidden relationship which takes on increasing significance in the course of the narrative (i.e. anti-Semitism and repression of activists inside East Block countries). There are two important clues in the text. Mr. Jordan is 59 years old, making him 25 in 1933. He is also employed by a Jewish humanitarian organization. Its capitalization in the text seems to be Johnson's device. These oblique allusions to Mr. Jordan's political activism and probable motivation take shape in the article. He was a high-ranking executive in an organization which "has long helped needy Jews overseas," decried by the communists as "a subversive Zionist agency." He had studied in Berlin. Before joining JOINT in 1941 he worked for an assortment of Jewish aid organizations. In 1948 he oversaw the resettlement of hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees who had made their way to Paris.[13] The interconnectivity of these events, which are presented as isolated facts in the narrative, were certainly known to Gesine and her "Genosse Schriftsteller." Both had access to the original article where these correlations were clearly stated. In this case, links between the items are deliberate and not just a function of the text itself, although it is made to appear so in the narrative.

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[13] "Body of American Missing in Prague is Found in River" A1.

Some months later, the Jordan murder is again front-page news when the Swiss pathologist in charge of the autopsy dies under mysterious circumstances:

> . . . [er] wurde am 10. Dezember mehrere hundert Meter von seinem verschlossenen Wagen entfernt in einem verschneiten Wald bei Zürich erfroren aufgefunden, und hatte die Untersuchung nicht abgeschlossen. So war es bisher. (II, 689)

The incident resurfaces in The New York Times around the same time as the Tet Offensive, which is a crucial period for Gesine. She records her reaction to Jordan's probable political murder for Marie, who is not meant to hear the tape until at least 1976 (II, 688). Despite the risks, she decides to move ahead with her personal agenda for the Prague trip:

> Dorogaja Marija, es könnte dennoch ein Anfang sein. Für den würde ich arbeiten, aus freien Stücken. Ich sitze hier allein am Tisch mit deinen Bildern aus der Times, allein mit der Lampe und deinem Schlafatem, der lauter ist als meine Feder, und allein mit einem albernen Vertrauen auf dieses Jahr. Dies habe ich dir aufgeschrieben, damit du spät genug verstehst, was ich vielleicht in diesem Jahr anfangen werde, 35 Jahre alt, du liebe Zeit, ein letztes Mal. Damit du nicht raten mußt, wie ich.
> Sincerely yours (II, 690)

Potential for personal danger and the disturbing signs of a cover-up must be weighed against the potential for a revitalized socialist state. Gesine realizes that the situation will never be perfect. It is a difficult decision which just as easily could turn out to be disastrous. Unlike Gesine, Marie at least will have a tape documenting her mother's decision process.

Aside from the Jordan murder, there are other New York Times items from August 21 which are not brought to the reader's attention. Some are preserved in Johnson's scrapbook, but do not appear in the text

itself: "Copter Crew takes 3 Wounded GIs from the Vietcong," "A Police Candidate Held in Heroin Case," "Police start Prostitution Drive; 121 Arrested in Midtown Streets."[14] The only one of the dominant themes which does not appear in this first "official" entry of Gesine's diary is that of inner-city crime, although they are preserved in Johnson's scrapbook.

The entry from the following day picks up the thematic threads previously introduced. A single sentence summarizes war news taken from three separate articles widely separated in the paper itself. This is followed by a second paragraph which devotes almost equal space to the synopsis of continuing riots in New Haven:

> Über Festland-China sind gestern zwei Düsenjäger der U.S. Marine abgeschossen worden. Das Kriegsministerium erklärt 32 Mann für amtlich tot in Viet Nam. Das Marinekorps hat 109 tote Vietnamesen aus dem Norden gezählt. Die Bande im Süden verspricht ganz ehrliche Wahlen.
> Gestern in New Haven sind abermals Schaufenster eingeschlagen und Brände gelegt worden. Die Polizei trug blaue Helme, Gewehre in der Hand, schoß Tränengas ab. Inzwischen sind 284 Bürger verhaftet, zumeist Afrikaner und Puertorikaner. (I, 13)

Aside from this news passage, the rest of the entry discloses details of Gesine's relationship to the paper. Although the two sections have nothing in common, it should be noted that both the war and the newspaper are defined in this entry for the first time in human terms.

The character of the two news summaries is very similar. The first item again is taken from the outside lead column. This again is another incursion into territory outside the defined scope of the war. No mention is made of the incident's seriousness, which Sen. Fulbright describes as

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[14] These articles are all found in Johnson's New York Times scrapbook for 21 Aug. 1967.

"most unfortunate and very ominous" and the Chinese call "an act of deliberate war provocation."[15] The type of news, despite the similar subject, is quite different. Unlike the August 21 items about the Vietnam War, in this entry there are two pieces of information which define the war in terms of human cost. The thematic and narrative shifts from battle summaries, body counts, names, and personal reflections are characteristic of Gesine's changing focus as she follows events in the paper. While the types of items included in the text appear random, viewed as a whole the portrayal of the Vietnam War emerges as well-rounded and balanced.

The item summarizing the New Haven riots is quite similar in character to that from the previous day. The use of "abermals" to describe vandalism reinforces the previous impression of a sustained chain of events, unlike the thrust of the original New York Times article which states that the disturbances were not nearly as severe as on the two previous nights.[16] Johnson also uses a color-blind term expressing community and solidarity ("Bürger") to describe the arrested ghetto inhabitants, almost in contradiction to the original article's use of the more socially neutral word, "persons." However, he specifies almost immediately that it was those who were jailed were "zumeist Afrikaner und Puertorikaner." The item's tone is also very different from the bland character of the war news preceding it. For example, both items incorporate numbers. There are almost three times more arrests during the riots in New Haven than casualties reported in Vietnam. While there is clearly no direct correspondence intended between the two, Johnson quite

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[15] William Beecher, "2 U.S. Navy Jets Downed In China," New York Times, 22 Aug. 1967: A1.

[16] William Borders, "Arsonists Upset New Haven Peace," New York Times, 22 Aug. 1967: A1.

deliberately seeks out specific types of information. The reader is left to reach his or her own conclusions about the relationship between the two incidents. Unlike the war items, which tend to focus on comparatively anonymous air strikes, the police are armed for hand-to-hand engagement. They are outfitted with helmets, weapons and tear gas. Although Johnson avoids drawing direct parallels through subject matter or language, he carefully selects his information for maximum impact. Two-thirds of the information on the New Haven riots included in the narrative is taken from the article's continuation, which is buried deep on page 27.

There are some changes and omissions immediately noticeable when Gesine's notations from August 22 are compared to the original New York Times articles. Subtle--but very intriguing--links hidden from the reader exist between the two versions. The differences which emerge in a side-by-side comparison of the two texts provides some insight into how Johnson deliberately shapes Gesine's presentation of events through selection and translation, the result being a significant departure from the original. However, the two texts are presented by the narrator as identical within the novel.

The novel's first two entries are linked thematically. For example, they both begin with one-sentence summaries of American incursions into prohibited air-space. In either case the incident could potentially provoke China to actively enter the war, possibly committing nuclear weapons. Unlike the August 21 entry, continued air strikes in and around Hanoi are not mentioned, although the article describing "one of the heaviest days of strikes" is included in Johnson's scrapbook along with several other omitted items pertaining to the war, and other information from the article on page three is included in the text. But first Gesine skips to page four to

the first in a daily sequence of "body count" items included during the first week's entries. The only item cited from the tiny article is the updated number of Americans recently killed in action. The information is inserted in the novel out of its original sequence, and includes only half of the sentence. The item continues with the names of seven young men from the New York-New Jersey area. The list of individual names--and even the existence of such a list--is omitted in the text. But subsequent entries show Gesine's progressive shift in focus during the first week from the meaningless numbers quoted by the government to the war's toll in terms of individual lives. The change in Gesine is independent of what she reads in the paper, as reports out of Vietnam vary little from day to day until the spring of 1968. The shift is reinforced by other themes in the text which will be discussed below.

On August 22 Gesine does note the number of North Vietnamese casualties. The information is from the Hanoi bombing article, which otherwise remains unmentioned in the text. However, Gesine and her narrative partner clearly read the article in its entirety, as the item cited is lifted from the article's final paragraph. Further differences between the two texts are readily apparent. The information on the Vietnamese body count is phrased quite differently than in the original article:

> In the ground war, U.S. Marines killed 109 North Vietnamese during a clash with an estimated enemy regiment 10 miles south of the demilitarized zone, a spokesman said. Five marines were reported to have been killed and 34 wounded.[17]

All mention of battle is deleted in the novel's one-sided body count, as are the number of U.S. casualties. And, for the second day in a row, Johnson

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17 "U.S. Navy Planes Attack Main Hanoi Power Plant," New York Times 22 Aug 1967: A3.

quite deliberately plays with the word "north" in his version of the news. The designation in the text, "Vietnamesen aus dem Norden," again emphasizes an arbitrary political division. The implication here is that the difference between the Vietnamese peoples is one of geography rather than ideology. There are, to be sure, problems in the original article, as illustrated by a marked shift to passive subjunctive when reporting Marine casualties. Building on the first item, the contrast between North and South is further emphasized in the next sentence, which refers to upcoming national democratic elections. In the text the "completely honest and impartial" elections promised by vice-presidential candidate and current Premier Nguyen Cao Ky is attributed to an anonymous "Bande im Süden," which can have criminal connotations. This reading is borne out by the original article. The substitution of an impersonal designation for the individual is in keeping with the tone established in the New York Time passages. It also neatly conveys the sentiment of the original article, which cites fears of governmental sabotage of ballot boxes along with some other known unsavory undemocratic practices, without citing any details.

Other events reported on August 22 which do not figure in the novel are worth mentioning. Two front page items are omitted here, but subsequently figure in the New York narrative. First, there are growing tensions between Britain and China, which erupt in bloodshed the next day. Then there are the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution hearings, to which Gesine devotes a great deal of attention in the weeks leading up to the Tet Offensive. The attack on the British embassy is even run in the outside left column. Beginning August 23 the phrase "Was machen die Chinesen?" becomes a leitmotif for the inscrutable motivations and actions of the Red Communist government: "Die Chinesen stecken die britische Botschaft in Peking an

und verprügeln den Geschäftsträger. Das machen die Chinesen" (I, 18). In the case of Red China, only what is observed first-hand at the scene can be truthfully reported. Other information, available only from government press releases, is useless. The issue of truth also develops into one of paramount importance in the Gulf of Tonkin incident, which concerns the supposed torpedo attack on two American battleships in the Tonkin Gulf in early August 1964. One week after the attack was reported Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which authorized the use of military force against North Vietnam. In 1967/8 Sen. Fulbright chaired a series of congressional hearings on the incident and its subsequent impact on governmental policy. Public concerns about increased deployments coincide with disturbing questions about the actual reasons for a U.S. presence in Southeast Asia. Substantial--and unanticipated--setbacks to American forces during the early part of 1968 are increasingly linked to this failed policy: "[Sen. Fulbright] mag keine andere Antwort erhalten als daß damals der Krieg hätte vermieden werden können, in dem heute amerikanische Truppen ihre eigene Botschaft in Saigon angreifen mußten, weil sie von Viet Cong besetzt war" (II, 662). Over a period of several weeks Gesine follows the hearings closely, although the issue is regularly reported in The New York Times much earlier. She takes up the issue only when questions arise concerning "who-knew-what-when." The Fulbright hearings tie in neatly at this point with Gesine's task of *Wahrheitsfindung*, as the government's version of what is happening in Vietnam becomes irreconcilable with what is being reported by television and newspaper reporters in country.

Another interesting omission is that of further developments in the suspicious demise of Charles Jordan which grabbed her attention the day

before. Drowning is cited as the official cause of death by a Czechoslovakian government pathologist. He reports finding no signs of violence on the body. According to the article there will be a subsequent outside investigation performed this time by a Western coroner. Curiously, Gesine ignores these new developments, such as they are, although the article appears on the front page in the lower outside right column. In fact, the Charles Jordan incident does not figure again in Jahrestage until early February, although developments continue to be reported intermittently in The New York Times. On February 7, during a late night recording session, Gesine discloses the same information she rejected six months earlier with a new twist which further obscures the circumstances of Jordan's death. The incident resurfaces in the paper at a crucial juncture for Gesine. The Tet Offensive has just begun, forcing Gesine to reevaluate her political alternatives, both of which she acknowledges to be fundamentally flawed. The significance of this passage will be discussed in detail below.

The escalating tensions between the U.S. and China, intensified bombing of Hanoi and the announcement of Jordan's official cause of death are all omitted, despite their proximity in the paper to other items registered by Gesine. It is difficult to speculate why she does not follow up on the topics introduced the previous day. The omission of the Jordan case is especially noticeable given her marked interest. All three omissions do have one common aspect: they are based on official (communist) governmental press releases. As the national paper of record, The New York Times prides itself on including the widest possible spectrum of international sources including known propaganda vehicles. As an attentive reader, Gesine is free to exercise judgment and selectivity, and to

ignore questionable reports. These types of decisions, hidden from the reader for the most part, indicate how, despite her socialist leanings, Gesine's sensibilities shape daily events as portrayed in Jahrestage. Sources such as Pravda, "das Organ der sowjetischen Wahrheit" (IV, 1680), "die den Gastgebern mitteilt auf Ehren und Gewissen" (IV, 1669), are mentioned only as a last resort, and are always cited with caustic suspicion. On August 4 for example, after observable tensions during a highly secretive meeting between Dubcek and Brezhnev,[18] Gesine derisively summarizes Pravda's ominous affirmation of the status quo:

> Das Communiqué der Sowjetunion mit ihren Schützlingen aus Bratislava, man kann es wenden und drehen, es steht doch nur drin was sie seit je aufsagen, von den sozialistischen Errungenschaften bis zur westdeutschen Sucht nach Revanche. Am Schluß ein mildes Bekenntnis aller zur nationalen Selbstbestimmung, ohne die Tschechoslowakei zu erwähnen. Die Sowjets versprechen, ihre letzten 16 000 Soldaten abzuziehen. Die Zensur bleibt abgeschafft. Die Freiheit sich zu versammeln und verbünden, die bleibt. Ein einziges Zugeständnis: die Führung in Prag hat die Zeitungen gebeten zu verzichten auf Artikel mit Meinungen, die könnten die Verbündeten betrüben. Artikel mit Tatsachen scheinen erlaubt. (IV, 1713)

At this point it is clear to Gesine that not only is the official version of Czechoslovakian-Soviet relations blatantly inaccurate, but that the complete lack of policy change puts the two countries on a collision course. Only three months before, Gesine could not envision Soviet intervention in

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[18] Gesine ironically notes the press' efforts to create news out of no news: "Immer noch kann die N.Y. Times kein gemeinsames Mittagessen nachweisen für Leonid Brezhnev und Alexander Dubcek, aber das wenigstens kann sie uns von ihnen berichten, wegen des atlantischen Unterschiedes in der Zeit: die beiden haben einander heute morgen im Bahnhof von Bratislava umarmt" (IV, 1707). The self-confessed lack of news in The New York Times creates a stark contrast to the account manufactured by Pravda.

Prague under any circumstances.[19] She consistently dismisses newspaper accounts based on socialist or communist sources which appear in The New York Times, although many of these same items appear in Johnson's scrapbooks. As she devotes more attention to developments in Czechoslovakia, however, she regularly turns to such sources. Even slanted information becomes valuable in assessing what is happening inside the country. For instance, the discrepancy between what is known about Charles Jordan's death and official government statements indicates that little has changed in terms of basic freedoms, despite marked progress with economic liberalizations. As she knows from past experience, ideological rhetoric is meaningless in a country where politically motivated murders and government cover-ups are tolerated. Unlike her parents, Hans Magnus Enzensberger and actor Wolfgang Kieling (I, 205), whom she criticizes for changing political allegiance at whim, Gesine is prepared to become actively involved in Czechoslovakia's transformation despite its obvious flaws. It is important to her that Marie knows the decision was carefully considered, and that the upcoming trip to Prague is a calculated risk. She leaves the U.S. clearly apprised of the problems dogging socialism's latest incarnation under Dubcek.

News from Vietnam and racial prejudice are the dominant issues during the first week, and remain important throughout the narrative. For Gesine, both issues are tied in with marginalization and powerlessness. In the narrative Gesine repeatedly calls attention to the consistently anonymous formula used for State Department body counts. The systematic progression from statistics to increasingly individual portrayals

19 "Sie werden es nicht tun. . . . Sie werden nicht mit Panzern nach Prag gehen. Nicht zwölf Jahre nach Budapest, 1968!" (III, 1111)

during the first week of Jahrestage would indicate that this is something of which she is acutely aware. On August 24 she reports: "Siebzehn Mann sind amtlich tot im Süden, und einer von ihnen war Anthony M. Galeno aus der Bronx" (I, 18). His death is of no particular significance to Gesine. The name means no more than the number. His name is mentioned in the paper only because he is from the area. As far as the narrative is concerned, the dead soldier "aus der Bronx" distinguishes himself only as a segue into the next item: "In der Bronx hat die Polizei ein Waffenlager ausgehoben." Four "private Patrioten" with an impressive collection of illegal weapons were arrested. Not coincidentally their stated purpose was to assassinate a prominent communist, "und dann die Nation von ihren übrigen Feinden schützen" (I, 18). The item on Anthony M. Galeno is inserted deliberately out of sequence. Unlike the two surrounding statements taken from the front page, the six line item "Bronx Man Killed in Vietnam" appears on page three. The majority of war items are simply restatements of the day's headlines or lead paragraphs.

Throughout the first week the trend in Gesine's Vietnam news summaries is from the general to the specific. Where she earlier cites only numbers of downed planes and rioters arrested with few other details, on August 23 she includes descriptions of two dramatic front-page photos in context of the daily news. Through the juxtaposition of news items and photo descriptions, Gesine subtly calls into question the editorial decisions taken by The New York Times which impact how a news event is packaged and subsequently perceived by the reader. The information, or lack thereof, conveyed by news photographs is as problematic as the statistics she quotes earlier.

The first photo is of a supposed crash site of an American plane. Several Vietnamese soldiers are probing the wreckage. A second, and far more visually informative, picture of another downed plane on page three shows a dead pilot lying atop the plane's fuselage. This photo is not mentioned in the text. Interestingly, Gesine first describes a photo in which she points out there is very little discernible information. Instead she notes the absence of facts. It is impossible to determine from the picture if the wreckage is that of an airplane, much less if it is that of an American. The caption is pure hearsay, yet the photo garners the premier front-page slot.[20] As it answers none of the basic questions of journalism, it is clear that the photo is included for its dramatic impact, rather than for its journalistic merit:

> Die Luftwaffe flog gestern 132 Angriffe auf Nordvietnam. Die Zeitung setzt unter ein Bild von den Trümmern eines Flugzeugs in Hanoi, daß die Kommunisten dies für ein abgeschossenes Flugzeug erklären. Das Foto war wichtig genug für die erste Seite, aber erst auf der sechsten, verstellt von Neuigkeiten aus Jerusalem, finden wir die amtlichen Todeserklärungen für vierzig Soldaten, nur die Toten aus New York und Umgebung namentlich genannt, fünfzehn Zeilen Lokales. (I, 16)

The following items make clear that the lack of news conveyed by the photo is only one of Gesine's concerns.

The brief daily body count, which lists only five local men by name, is significantly further down on the scale of news priorities. As Gesine implies, the fifteen line article is buried on page six underneath a chatty human-interest story about the dismantling of the Mandelbaum Gate,

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20 "WRECK OF U.S. JET, HANOI SAYS: Official Communist source that released picture says it shows a U.S. plane that crashed near the Soviet Embassy. The caption material did not indicate when the photograph was made." New York Times 23 Aug. 1967: A1.

which is described in the article as the "symbol of divided Jerusalem." Gesine pointedly ignores any contemporary political parallels, as well as the adjacent article with news from the BRD. The changes, which she dismisses in the text as "Neuigkeiten", are described in terms of aesthetic improvement, rather than political progress. Using this measuring stick, the article has no real news value. With the continued use of "verstellt" Gesine takes issue with the paper's implied value judgment. Viewed in context of the paper's format, the deaths of another forty American soldiers in Vietnam is not news. Gesine underscores this perception through mention of the article's placement, priority, and length. The other thirty-five "amtlichen Todeserklärungen" are consigned *en masse* to anonymity. She implies that the real significance of such items is that they are no longer considered newsworthy, as indicated by their low-priority position in the format. The "real news" is that body counts are regularly relegated to a journalistic no-man's land: "Muß einer aus New York und Umgebung sein, damit sein Tod in Viet Nam persönlich verzeichnet wird in der nützlichsten Zeitung, die er hätte lesen können?" (II, 649). Her sustained emphasis on war casualty items often constitute a challenge to both the paper's dutiful reporting of military press releases and their sterile bureaucratic language: "Die amerikanischen Verluste seit amtlichem Beginn des Krieges standen gestern bei 17 696 Toten, 109 922 Verwundeten und ungefähr 1000 Vermißten oder Gefangenen" (II, 732). A few weeks later she notes: "Für die amtlich in Viet Nam Getöteten aus der new yorker Gegend nimmt die Times heute nicht mehr die normale, sondern die allerkleinste Type" (II, 827). The number of casualties, removed from their original context, or perhaps further distorted by rhetoric, are rendered essentially meaningless: "Wenn ein Stützpunkt in Viet Nam leichte

Verluste meldet, können von 3,000 Mann gut und gern 100 umgekommen sein, die zählen in dieser Sprache noch nicht" (III, 1203). Well before the end of the novel such reports have lost all credibility: "Amerikanische Truppen unter Maschinengewehrfeuer wollen nur zehn eigene Tote verloren haben, schreiben den anderen fünfhundert an. Solche runden Zahlen" (IV, 1876). It seems to Gesine that nothing will prod the U.S. out of its complacency where Vietnam is concerned:

> 13 643 amerikanische Kriegstote bis heute in Viet Nam. Kann es sein, daß sie den 200 Millionen Bürger der U.S.A. noch nicht ausreichen im Verhältnis der Zahlen? (I, 149)[21]

A report filed by a war correspondent from the field concurs with Gesine's impression: ". . . drei Luftangriffe, sieben Bomberwellen, zahlreiche Einzelflüge der Amerikaner und weitere acht Luftalarme; der Tag wurde ihm als normal beschrieben" (I, 201). Ironically, when D.E. is killed in a fiery plane crash while traveling on government business, no notice appears in the paper:

> - Mit vollem Bewußtsein zerbrochen und brennend!
> - Ja. Verzeihen Sie, Frau Cresspahl.
> - So etwas hätte in der New York *Times* gestanden.
> - Die Regierung, bei der der Tote angestellt war, drückte ein Verlangen aus, die Nachricht zu unterdrücken. (IV, 1741)

Like the anonymous soldiers who died in Vietnam, D.E.'s death also fails to register on the daily record.

The last item in the progression from statistics to specifics is another photo, which is radically different from the previous one. It appears on

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[21] In an earlier passage, Gesine notes bitterly: "Aus der Liste der amtlichen Toten führt die Zeitung nur zwei an, die zufällig aus dem Staat New York waren, als verschlüge die genaue Gesamtzahl ja doch nichts gegen einhundertfünfundneunzig Millionen Landsbürger" (I, 36).

page two, oddly on a day when Gesine specifically mentions that she has altered her normal reading pattern. Instead of starting on page one, she uses the index to ferret out items that interest her. The results of her search indicate that the news from Vietnam is not of particular interest on that day. Still, the photo captures her attention. It depicts an entirely different aspect of the war--one that is epic and heroic. The hero is literally telling his story as he indicates on a map where he shot down two North Vietnamese pilots: ". . . man sieht ihn im Profil, seine Lippen von den Zähnen gezogen, er scheint schlapp und befriedigt zu lächeln." The mood conveyed by this image is at odds with the item immediately following:

> Die amtlichen Toten der Amerikaner stehen heute auf der zwölften Seite, sieben Zeilen ohne Zusammenhang mit den Nachrichten darüber. "Ein Mann aus Long Island unter den Toten" sagt die Überschrift. In der Meldung sind es dann achtundzwanzig. (I, 24)

The contrast between the two items works on different levels. There is the difference in placement, and therefore in news priority. The victorious pilot is pictured on page 2, the unfortunate dead are literally buried on page 12. The photo conveys an individual image and strong impression of personality. The body count item is anonymous in its lack of detail. Gesine points to the fact that the short article does not appear with other war news. It is surrounded by totally unrelated items. A formatting decision effectively removes this short article from the collage of related items which are run on pages one and two. The photo of a confident, successful pilot and its priority placement optimistically suggests progress in the war effort. This is also the administration's official assessment. However, Gesine emphasizes the fact that on August 25 Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara calls the bombing campaign against North Vietnam into

question, and states bluntly: "Mit Bomben kriegen wir die nicht an unseren Tisch" (I, 26). This was an indicator of deep rifts within the administration which would become obvious during the Tet Offensive in early February 1968. The government was to keep up the air offensive, despite increasing evidence of its ineffectiveness, for another five months. Ironically, it was only after Johnson announced a halt to bombing on March 31, 1968 that Hanoi agreed to the peace talks in Paris.

From very early in the narrative Gesine indicates through both her choice of material and veiled criticisms, that she is aware that there are at least two versions of the events in Vietnam. One is authored by the Johnson administration and the War Department. The other is scripted by the news media, including The New York Times. Occasionally she makes mention of the North Vietnamese battle and casualty reports, although they are reported as inaccurate. Gesine passes on the information objectively in simple acknowledgment that this other version does exist:

> Der amerikanische Befehlshaber in Südvietnam sagt: Die Nordvietnamesen lügen. Radio Hanoi gibt die amerikanischen Verluste (Tote, Verwundete, Vermißte) für die ersten sechs Monate dieses Jahres mit 110 000 an. Er sagt: Es sind 37 038. (I, 40)

Gesine's newspaper summaries constitute yet another version which is synthesized by a vigilant reader.

The emphasis on numbers further underscores the discrepancy between the image of the war presented on high-profile pages, and the body counts relegated to the paper's interior. One hero versus 28 fatalities suggests an inversion of priorities. To underscore her point, Gesine later mentions the obituary of a self-made millionaire which appears on page one: ". . . die Zeitung widmet seinem Andenken über zweihundert Zeilen"

(I, 25). Together the three items form an eloquent commentary on the relative worth of the individual items, and reveal a quite damning assessment on Gesine's part of the paper's priorities. In the New York Times passages she notes not only the events of the day, but also demonstrates an acute and highly critical awareness of the editorial decisions which determine how that news is packaged. The relative value of competing news items, as suggested by placement and space allocation, speaks volumes.

Rounding out the the first week of the calendar narrative is only a brief synopsis of war news. The two short items on Sunday, August 27, neatly restate topics from the first two entries. In fact, the first item is a paraphrase of the news from one week ago: "Und das Wetter in Nordvietnam war wieder gut genug für Bombenangriffe, und das Pentagon läßt durchblicken, daß die ja ihre eigenen Maschinen in China verstecken, und. . . ." (I, 29). The repetitive nature of the news from Vietnam is emphasized by both the novel's structure and content. The outrageous becomes acceptable. Language also contributes to the alienation between reported events and the reality they describe. The body count items repeatedly use phrases such as "die amtlichen Toten," "Kriegstote," or "die Nachrichtstoten" for fatalities in order to emphasize the aseptic language of the original articles, which invariably refer to them simply as "killed in action." In another instance she notes the coining of a new phrase: "In der Schlacht um Corinthien haben die amerikanischen Marineinfanteristen einen neuen Ausdruck für den Tod unter Artilleriefeuer: man wird "weggeblasen" (I, 133-4). Like Mary McCarthy, Gesine is pointedly aware of the euphemisms designed to obscure the brutal reality they represent. As is apparent in numerous examples from the first seven dated entries,

Gesine is aware that her perception of the daily news is manipulated by the paper. In many instances her news summaries demonstrate deliberate attempts to read against the grain. Admittedly, her priorities are also biased. All the same, her selection of news topics and implied questioning of editorial decisions effect an alternative to the New York Times' prepackaged version of the day's events.

During the early part of the novel the issue of race is second only to that of the Vietnam conflict. A news photo mentioned on August 23 along with that of the downed American plane, is again presented in the context of a larger event: a weekend of racial rioting in the ghettos of New Haven. It has only its dramatic impact in common with the photo of the supposed crash site. Unlike the previous picture, this one eloquently illustrates the riot's emotional aftermath, and the underlying divisiveness which is both its cause and consequence. The story she has been following for the last few days is reduced to a single political moment. The image is that of a black activist, arrested during the New Haven riots, as he is released from jail. Via the photo Gesine can imagine herself as part of the largely African-American crowd gathered in front of the courthouse not far from her Riverside Drive apartment: "Sie stellt sich vor, daß sie die Gesichter der Polizisten beobachtet hätte, deren eines zu sehen ist unter der erhobenen schwarzen Faust in der Zeitung, mit einem ungläubigen Ausdruck fast altersweiser Art, noch im Nachgeschmack der vorangegangenen Prügelei" (I, 16). In the photo Gesine sees a tableau capturing the opposing sides of the weekend riots and of a divided nation. The defiant young black activist clenches his upraised fist in the symbol of black power as he gives a defiant speech on the courthouse steps. He makes the gesture in the general direction of a white police officer unfazed by the tumultuous scene. The

photo conveys more information and emotion than the preceding matter-of-fact article summary describing the previous night's police action. The photo provides an immediate context racial turmoil, a problem with which Gesine strongly identifies. She can place herself there among the crowd. Had she been there " sie einen Führer der radikalen Afrikaner rufen hören können, daß Krieg sei mit den Weißen und Gewehre vonnöten" (I, 16). A look at the original article shows that here Gesine targets an item of substantially lesser news value to The New York Times. The quote appears near the end of the article on page 25: "We are at war!

. . . We are caught behind enemy lines and you better get yourself some guns."[22] H. Rap Brown's statements quoted on page one adjacent to the photo are limited to repeated cries of "Black Power" and empty rhetoric: ". . . if he [President Johnson] is worried about my rifle, wait until I get my atom bomb."[23] In the narrative, the statement selectively heard by Gesine forms a bond between the young activist and an imaginary observer. The photo represents a single message. The photo, the gesture and the statement form a single powerful image in the narrative. In this case, Gesine literally hears what she wants to hear. While there are numerous instances in the text of photos which are much more dramatic, these first images of the plane wreckage and H. Rap Brown are both important in context of a progression from anonymous statistic to concrete example.

The racial conflict in the U.S. is one with which Gesine feels a particular affinity. While the issue disappears from the newspaper narrative at the same time it disappears from the front page, the themes of

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[22] Earl Caldwell, "Rap Brown Released After Judge Reduces Bail at a Stormy Hearing," New York Times 24 Aug. 1967: A25.

[23] Caldwell A1.

racial tensions and prejudice remain important elements throughout the first week of the novel. In fact they are the dominant considerations during her first few discouraging weeks in New York City. Her search for an apartment yields several examples of blatant discrimination. She views a number of exorbitantly priced dumps which are "teuer weil frei von Negern als Nachbarn" (I, 19). Even her four year-old daughter is cognizant of the racial undercurrents around her, and asks her mother with characteristic--and much criticized--perceptiveness: ". . . warum manche Leute hier eine dunkle Hautfarbe haben, oder warum alte Frauen aus dem Schwarzwald Juden sind" (I,20). The link between racism and anti-Semitism is reinforced repeatedly in the narrative. When Gesine locates a promising place in Queens, she is appalled by the agent's unabashed prejudices. He tells the Cressphals, whom he assumes to be Jewish: "Haben Sie keine Sorge, wir halten die shwartzes schon draußen." In an uncharacteristically dramatic moment she storms out of the room, but not before spitting out, "you bastard of a Jew" (I, 21). In the heat of the moment Gesine condemns not just the man but the race, and she resorts to an anti-Semitic outburst.

This confrontation precipitates a hurried decision to return to Germany: "Unter solchen Leuten ist nicht zu Leben" (I, 21). Most critics assume that Gesine is at the airport, waiting for her flight, when she reads the following: "Die westdeutsche Regierung will die Verjährung für Morde und Massenausrottung in der Nazizeit ganz und gar aufheben, vielleicht" (I, 21). However, the article is actually part of the contemporary narrative and appears in the August 24, 1967 edition of The New York Times. The statute of limitations for Nazi capital crimes is set to expire in 1969. The bill, originally approved by the Adenauer government five years earlier, is

currently in committee. Culpability for war crimes would be extended through 1979, although the Minister of Justice, Gustav Heinemann, still finds this unsatisfactory.[24] The placement of the item in the narrative both justifies her decision to stay in the U.S. and at the same time her remark becomes a much broader condemnation of racial prejudice wherever it surfaces. "Such people" exist in both societies, along with those who passively tolerate such attitudes. According to Johnson: "Die guten Leute wollen eine gute Welt; die guten Leute tun nichts dazu."[25] The final news item hints at Gesine's own thoughts as she reflects on the day's news as a whole: "Die leichte Artillerie kann man mit der Post bestellen, aber für eine Pistole braucht man einen Waffenschein, und sie traut sich nicht zur Polizei" (I, 21). The statement, which comes almost as an afterthought, alludes to H. Rap Brown's prophecy of the coming racial war and the "private Patrioten" armed to the teeth against vague enemies.

Gesine's reasons for staying in New York remain obscure. It is later implied that she did read something in the newspaper which caused her to stay. Quite by chance she finds a small ad "ohne noch zu suchen" (I, 26) for a rent-controlled apartment in the ethnically diverse Upper West Side. It fulfills each of her criteria:

> . . . drei Zimmer am Riverside Drive . . . "alle mit Blick auf den Hudson," zu haben auf ein Jahr für 125 Dollar im Monat. Die Stimme am Telefon klang erstaunt über Gesines Fragen. Gewiß war die Wohnung überlaufen mit Anwärtern, "aber wir warten auf jemand, den wir mögen." Kinder waren zugelassen in dem Haus. "Sollten Sie auch farbig sein, kommen Sie unbesorgt." (I, 26)

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[24] David Binder, "Extension Sought for Trying Nazis," New York Times 24 Aug. 1967: A11.

[25] Johnson, "Über eine Haltung des Protestierens" 95.

The leaser's complete lack of prejudice, the proximity to the river, as well as the area's upper-middle class appeal turns the situation around. So they stay in New York. Sometime later she admits with irony that "die meisten Häuser sind sich noch zu fein für dunkelhäutige Bürger als Mieter" (I, 59), although they are considered good enough to work as maids and gardeners. Gesine remains in the neighborhood, although she is aware of segregationist attitudes.

The issue of race in America is one of which Gesine remains aware of throughout Jahrestage. Incidents of racial tensions punctuate the narrative. She is interested in the fate of "LeRoi Jones, der kämpferische Schriftsteller, Neger" (II, 552), who is sentenced to 30 months in state prison for illegal firearms possession during a week-long New Jersey riot the previous summer. The judge hands down the maximum sentence, based "in großem Ausmaß" on a poem published in "The Evergreen Review" rather than his actual record. For several days she follows the controversy surrounding Eartha Kitt, who publicly chastises the First Lady at a White House reception:

> Miß Kitt wußte eine Antwort auf die Frage, warum junge Leute auf der Straße rebellieren, warum sie Rauschgift nehmen und auf die Schule verzichten: "Weil man sie von ihren Müttern wegreißt, damit sie in Viet Nam erschossen werden." "Ihr schickt die Besten des Landes in Tod und Verstümmelung. . . ."
> Eartha Kitt: Die anderen Gäste kennten die Ghettos von Ausflügen: sie aber habe in der Gosse gelebt. (II, 613)

The incident brought Lady Bird to the brink of tears. The issue of course, even for The New York Times, was not Kitt's right to express her opinion but that she insulted the First Lady:

> Nicht leicht die Ruhe findet der, der einst der Tante Times mißfiel. . . . Die New York Times indes bleibt hart

> und spricht zum Schluß nicht von den Telegrammen, die Miss Kitt zustimmen, sondern von jenen, die die Frau des Präsidenten trösten sollen. Na, Miss Kitt? (II, 636)

The First Lady may have had her feelings hurt, but Eartha Kitt was the one who suffered in the long run. She was subsequently black-listed in the U.S., and found it difficult to find work after the incident. Although her career abroad prospered, she never recovered her popularity at home.

On a personal level Gesine offers her daughter's classmate, Francine, a temporary home while her mother is in the hospital recovering from a stabbing. It is a difficult twelve days as cultural and socioeconomic differences play out in the microcosm of their Riverside Drive apartment (II,730-4). Eventually Francine is forced to return to her mother and poverty. Despite good intention, the Cresspahls are powerless to affect any long-term changes in her situation.

A few months later the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King and the accompanying riots have a devastating effect on Gesine. Rumors run wild as the whites expect civil war to break out in the streets. In the days following his murder the void between black and white America seems as unbreachable as ever:

> *Es tut mir leid, daß sie ihn erschossen haben, Bill.*
> *Daß Sie höflich sind, Mrs. Cresspahl, ich weiß es.*
> *Es tut mir leid.*
> *Und doch, wenn heute nacht die schwarzen Leute aus Harlem hierher kommen; keinen Finger werd ich für Sie rühren, Madam. Wissen Sie überhaupt, was das ist, Angst haben?*
> *Ja.*
> *Nichts wissen Sie. Sie sind nicht schwarz.* (II, 960)

The next day she tries three times to write a note of sympathy to the widow. Regardless of how Gesine addresses her--formally, informally, in terms of personal or national loss--all attempts break off abruptly. Words simply fail as with each attempt she realizes that she is unmistakably the "other":

> Liebe Mrs. King: Zu dem persönlichen Verlust, den Sie erlitten haben
> der Ihnen zugestoßen ist
> den die Weißen Ihnen zugefügt haben, möchte ich Ihnen mei -
> . . . Angesichts des Verlustes, der Ihre Kinder und Sie betroffen hat, der Ihnen und Ihren Kindern von den Weißen bereitet wurde. . . . (II, 961)

There seems nothing of relevance to say. Suddenly, she realizes that despite her best efforts, as a white woman living in the U.S. she can no longer pretend that she is somehow untainted by the system in which she is living:

> *In was für einem Land lebst du, aus freien Stücken? In einem Land, in dem Neger umgebracht werden. Was willst gerade du da schreiben.*
> *Ja. Nichts. Nichts.* (II, 962)

As a social participant, she must shoulder some of the blame for the transgressions of the community as a whole. This is the same issue with which she struggles in understanding her parents complicity with the Nazi Regime: "Leben heißt Schuldigwerden."[26] With King's assassination Gesine must openly acknowledge that her utopian "moralische Schweiz" is not only irreconcilable with 1960s America, but also that in remaining she silently condones both the good and the bad aspects of the society:

> Für sich selber geht es ihr darum, nicht mitschuldig zu werden an dem, was um sie herum vorgeht; sie stellt dabei strenge Anforderungen für ein integres Verhalten

[26] Eva Schiffer, "Politisches Engagement oder Resignation? Weiteres zu Uwe Johnsons 'Jahrestage,'" Der deutsche Roman und seine historischen und politischen Bedingungen, ed. Wolfgang Paulsen (Bern: Francke, 1977) 237.

> an sich und ist ständig auf der Suche nach Symptomen für eine Entwicklung in der Regierung und in der Gesellschaft, die es ihr ermöglichen würden, einen fortgesetzten Aufenthalt in den USA zu rechtfertigen.[27]

Her previous political position ("Wir sind hier zu Gast") is insupportable in the aftermath of the King murder. Not only does she have nothing of relevance to say to Mrs. King, she can no longer in good conscience justify herself or society: ". . . ich möchte Ihnen versichern, daß nicht alle damit einverstan- " (II, 961). A few days later, however, Gesine spots a photo of the King family at the coffin. As is typical with photo descriptions in Jahrestage, they become a canvas upon which she projects her own opinions and emotions. The youngest child can hardly see into the coffin, and "versucht über [King] hinwegzusehen." The attitudes of the other children are fundamentally different: "[Sie] wissen, daß sie die Leiche ansehen müssen. Sie sind aber die senkrechte Blickrichtung nicht gewohnt" (II, 970). Because of the civil rights movement they have not had to learn to bow their heads, avert their eyes, or move to the back of the bus. In her description Gesine conveys what she perceives as King's legacy: a generation of children who have never been subjected to segregation. The King children embody hope for the future, as does Marie. It is Marie who has taken action: she has made friends outside her own class and race, defended Francine in public, and, as her mother's letters were accumulating in the waste basket, dashed off an emotional telegram to King's widow.

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[27] Ree Post-Adams, "Von Mecklenburg bis Manhattan," Text+Kritik, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold, 65/66 (1980): 95.

Photos are a significant component of both narrative strands in Jahrestage.[28] In an interview with Horst Bienek Johnson emphasizes the role of photography and the inherently subjective version of reality they depict:

> Denken Sie an die Familienalben und [. . .] an die Pressefotos in der Zeitung, die uns das Geschehen des Vortags, bei dem wir zugegen waren, in einer ganz anderen Haltung und Bedeutung servieren. Und die Fotografie ist ja von unserem Denken zunächst einmal geschaffen und dann geformt worden, so daß wir sie benutzen.[29]

For the most part the images described are news photos, but Gesine also mentions a few significant personal photos which surface as part of her historical reconstruction:

> Erinnerung und Gegenwart bilden dabei das grundlegende, kontrapunktische Prinzip für das zeitliche wie räumlich weit gespannte Erzählen. In diese bipolare Konstruktion werden von Anfang an photographisiche Bilder eingebaut, die durch ihre exponierte Stellung im Text immer wieder wichtige Erzählzusammenhänge stiften, in denen gelebte, erfahrene Vergangenheit und gegenwärtiges Erinnern für Augenblicke zu einer Einheit finden.[30]

Fahlke and Zetzsche argue the photos are a means by which Johnson links past and present with the individual revealing the event's larger social significance. Contemporary photos become the measuring stick and the

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[28] Johnson was himself a decent amateur photographer and "vor allem jedoch ein leidenschaftlicher Sammler von photographischen Ansichten." Jürgen Zetzsche, Die Erfindung photographischer Bilder im zeitgenössischen Erzählen. Zum Werk von Uwe Johnson und Jürgen Becker (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1994) 250.

[29] Bienek 91.

[30] Eberhard Fahlke and Jürgen Zetzsche, "Photographische Augenblicke in der erzählten Geschichte der 'Jahrestage,'" Johnson: Ansichten, Einsichten, Aussichten, ed. Manfred Jurgensen (Bern: Franke 1989) 81.

analogy for the images preserved in memory. In a paraphrase of Walter Benjamin and John Berger they state that they have "doch in unserer Zeit die Funktion übernommen, die vorher allein der Erinnerung eigen war."[31] Photos and remembered images unlock associative chains which are recounted in the narrative. In an earlier analysis Zetzsche writes:

> Eine Photographie, herausgehoben aus ihrer Zeitungs-alltäglichkeit und transformiert von ihrer visuellen Oberflächlichkeit in eine sprachliche Beschreibung, findet im fiktionalen Raum eine Einblendung in das Bewußtsein der Protagonisten als erinnerbare Erfahrung.[32]

While both Fahlke and Zetzsche make insightful observations into narrative strategies and the significance of the photos within the text, they make little mention of the numerous original photos in The New York Times, or how Gesine interprets them within the narrative.

The use of photos in Jahrestage is striking in that, unlike the news summaries which are based at least in part on the original articles, the language used to describe them is wholly original, dramatic and emotionally laden. While the photos are incorporated as documentary materials, the visual information must be conveyed by Gesine for the reader. The result is the subjugation of material to her subjective interpretation: "Die Wirklichkeit der Photographie verschmilzt mit der Wirklichkeit der Fiktion."[33] Like the newspaper items, however, the reality captured by the photo image is problematic. The news photos which eventually make the paper are subject to a long filtration process. They are

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[31] Fahlke and Zetzsche 67.

[32] Zetzsche 250.

[33] Zetzsche 256.

selected for their content and their implied narrative. The picture that appears front and center on page one must further have the ability to sell papers.

Like any other document, images are man-made.[34] Articles, however, have by-lines, whereas it is not immediately apparent that photos are also "authored." The image functions simultaneously as subject and object, and as document and interpretation. The photographer plays the role of both witness and critic. The final image represents a series of judgments. It portrays only one isolated segment of a web of events which lie outside the frame. At the same time it becomes representative of what is invisible to the viewer. The significance of the individual frame becomes enlarged and distorted:

> An image is a sight which has been recreated or reproduced. It is an appearance, or a set of appearances, which has been detached from the place and time in which it first made its appearance and preserved--for a few moments or a few centuries. Every image embodies a way of seeing. Even a photograph. For photographs are not, as is often assumed, a mechanical record. Every time we look at a photograph, we are aware, however slightly, of the photographer selecting that sight from an infinity of other possible sights. This is true even in the most casual family snapshot. The photographer's way of seeing is reflected in his choice of subject. . . . Yet, although every image embodies a way of seeing, our perception or appreciation of an image depends also upon our own way of seeing.[35]

Walter Benjamin points out that a photograph is a bridge between subject and observer:

> [Die technische Reproduktion] kann . . . das Abbild des Originals in Situationen bringen, die dem Original selbst

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[34] John Berger, Ways of Seeing (New York: Penguin Books, 1973) 9.

[35] Berger 9-10.

> nicht erreichbar sind. Vor allem macht sie ihm möglich, dem Aufnehmenden entgegenzukommen. . . .[36]

The photo, although taken of an authentic image, once removed from its context, becomes a representation which supplants the image's original significance, whose value is based on ritual function. A photo is also characterized by an intervening eye which edits what form the original image will take. The original object is unique, whereas the copy is characterized by its reproducibility. He continues:

> Von der photographischen Platte z.B. ist eine Vielheit von Abzügen möglich; die Frage nach dem echten Abzug hat keinen Sinn. In dem Augenblick aber, da der Maßstab der Echtheit an der Kunstproduktion versagt, hat sich auch die gesamte soziale Funktion der Kunst umgewälzt. An die Stelle ihrer Fundierung aufs Ritual tritt ihre Fundierung auf eine andere Praxis: nämlich ihre Fundierung auf Politik.[37]

While the medium itself can be defined as neutral, the viewpoint of the photographer cannot. The viewer is directed by the photographer to view the image in a certain way. With captions accompanying news photographs, Benjamin points out, this trend toward politization becomes even more pronounced.

The rest of Benjamin's essay is devoted primarily to the discussion of film. He does make some remarks applicable to the camera's mediating role between subject and audience. First, the camera does not treat the event ("performance") as an integral whole. Second, the camera's relationship to the subject is constantly changing as defined by the camera

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[36] Walter Benjamin, "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit," Gesammelte Schriften, eds. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, vol. I-2 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1974) 476-7.

[37] Benjamin 481-2.

operator's viewpoint. Lastly, the editor chooses the final image or series of images from the pool of material available.[38] When documenting an event the news photographer is, in effect, shooting a film made up of individual stills. In most cases, only one will finally be selected to represent an entire sequence of events. In addition to the photographer and the editor, the camera's presence is an intervening device in itself. Benjamin's remarks about the camera's role in film is just as descriptive of its role in news photography:

> [Der Cutter] umfaßt eine gewisse Anzahl von Bewegungsmomenten, die als solche der Kamera erkannt werden müssen--von Spezialeinstellungen wie Großaufnahmen zu schweigen. So wird die Leistung des Darstellers einer Reihe von optischen Tests unterworfen. Dies ist die erste Folge des Umstands, daß die Leistung des Filmdarstellers durch die Apparatur vorgeführt wird. Die zweite Folge beruht darauf, daß der Filmdarsteller, da er nicht selbst seine Leistung dem Publikum präsentiert, die dem Bühnenschauspieler vorbehaltene Möglichkeit einbüßt, die Leistung während der Darbietung dem Publikum anzupassen. Dieses kommt dadurch in die Haltung eines durch keinerlei persönlichen Kontakt mit dem Darsteller gestörten Begutachters. *Das Publikum fühlt sich in den Darsteller nur ein, indem es sich in den Apparat einfühlt. Es übernimmt also dessen Haltung: es testet.*[39]

According to Benjamin there are three intervening factors between the object or event and its audience: the camera apparatus, the photographer and the editor. Each has limitations, whether imposed by mechanics, viewpoint or selection criteria. In news photography, these are factors of which the audience is normally not aware. The reader is presented with a

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[38] Benjamin 488.

[39] Benjamin 488.

documentary image and provided with informative captions. Although the image presented is seen through a specific, selective "eye," the intervening factors disappear in the final product.

The news photos in Jahrestage are subjected to additional filters. In the novel, they are usually discussed in context of the daily summaries. In the case of photojournalism, the image's interpretation is further prejudiced by the surrounding text. When viewed in the newspaper format, subject, context and text contribute to the photo's politization. Gesine's perception of the image adds yet another layer of meaning: "Herausgehoben aus der Vergänglichkeit der Bilderflut, eingebunden in einen neuen Schilderungsvorgang, werden sie dort zum Anlaß für ein--gleichwohl nur in der Beschreibung vorhandenes--genaueres, physiognomisches Hinsehen; Anlaß zur Standortbestimmung, Anlaß zum fortwährenden Fragestellen, letztlich Veranlassung und Beweggrund des Erzählens."[40] Fahlke and Zetzsche acknowledge that the photos cannot be considered a reproduction of reality.[41] They assume that the photo's value is in its abstract function for the individual observer: "Indem der Betrachter einem photographischen Bild zeitliche Dauer zueignet, es gewissermaßen in einen zeitlichen Rahmen versetzt, verläßt die Photographie die Ebene der puren Abbildung von Realität, ihre abstrakte Gegenwart wird historisch konkret."[42] The photo's subjective significance for Gesine plays some role in almost every instance of what Fahlke and

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[40] Fahlke and Zetzsche 80.

[41] Fahlke and Zetzsche 74.

[42] Fahlke and Zetzsche 79-80.

Zetzsche call "photographische[s] Erzählen."[43] Gesine is well aware that news photos constitute another element that can be editorially manipulated. She is skeptical of The New York Time's coverage of a large antiwar demonstration in Washington D.C.:

> *Wir wissen ja nicht einmal, was die Zeitung mit ihren Fotos vorhat. Das Bild von den drei Bundessheriffs auf der ersten Seite, die mit ihren weißen Knüppeln auf einen schon liegenden Menschen einschlagen, soll es die Empörung der Abonnenten hervorlocken? Das Bild daneben von den brüllenden Jungen, soll es hinweisen auf den unbürgerlichen Bart, die tarnende Sonnenbrille, den vom Schreien verzerrten Mund?*
> *Die Bekanntmachung der Opposition gegen den Krieg in Viet Nam durch die Nachrichtenmittel, wäre da nicht eine Chance für die Opposition?*
> *Eine Chance.*
> *Für dich muß bereits eine Chance garantiert sein, nicht wahr.*
> *Ein wenig.* (I, 207)

Although the demonstration generates a lot of coverage, she is aware that the paper has packaged the event a particular way. Rather than showing peaceful scenes of the more than 50,000 demonstrators exercising their civil rights, the paper instead chooses dramatically charged photos. This may be in the interest of selling more papers, but it also conveys the demonstration as an unruly, even violent counterculture gathering.

The photos of the pilot detailing his "kills" and H. Rap Brown are illustrative of two basic narrative strategies used in Jahrestage. The optimism conveyed by the first photo displaces other news from the front in what Gesine perceives as manipulation. According to the text, the pilot has set a new record of a "Double Kill in a Single Action."[44] The photo appears between three other related articles which form a stark contrast to the mood

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[43] Fahlke and Zetzsche 81.

[44] New York Times 25 Aug 1967: A2.

conveyed by the photo, including one with the headline "13th U.S. Plane Shot Down In North In a Week." Conversely, the image of the defiant black activist on the courthouse steps has a strong emotional impact. She accepts it as an accurate representation, and does not question how this photo might also be manipulative. The speech is characterized as "short but fiery" in the article,[45] which is devoted primarily to his arrest and hearing, yet it is selected as the representative image.

Many of the news photos which catch Gesine's eye are from Vietnam. There are several which showcase American soldiers as heroes coming to the aid of women and children. In one photo a soldier carries an old peasant woman: "Stangenbeine, altersteif, verzerrten Gesichts aus einer Gefahrenzone auf höheres Gelände. . . . 'Ein Angehöriger der Streitkräfte hilft ihr': sagt die New York Times" (I, 99). The accompanying text makes clear the intended message, which Gesine passes on with subtle sarcasm as if the scene could be interpreted otherwise. Some weeks later another page three photo, "wo die New York Times für gewöhnlich die Fotonachrichten aus Viet Nam abbildet" (I, 304), shows a woman "die mit vorgehaltenen Händen im Schutt und Rauch ihres Dorfes Soldaten der U.S.A. um Schonung ihres Hauses anfleht" (I, 243). Like the body counts and the battle summaries, these images are interchangeable. A photo run on one day could be just as appropriate on another.

Gesine frequently takes issue with the calculated, packaged impressions they convey, as well as with the sensationalism inherent in some images. One presidential press photo shows the Johnson family posing outside a church. They are posed in a line which fills the photo. Gesine's reaction is cynical, yet cryptic:

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[45] Caldwell A1.

> Das andere Bild auf der ersten Seite der New York Times ist achteinhalb mal fast sieben Zoll groß. Es zeigt den Präsidenten Johnson mit Frau, Töchtern und Schwiegersöhnen. Die Nachricht besteht darin, daß die Leute in der Kirche gewesen sind. (I, 267)

The reference to "das andere Bild" begs a look at the original paper. The other photo on the front page is much smaller. It shows the helicopter rescue of two soldiers in the Mekong Delta. Their place in the front-page hierarchy is inversely proportional to their true news value. There are several photos of the President which Gesine comments on. On Christmas Eve the paper runs two of Johnson, "wie benachbart, wie verwandt." In the first he is decorating combat veterans. In the second he is pictured with the Pope. Gesine asks sardonically, "Weil Weihnachten ist?" (II, 503). She is disgusted when the paper publishes a photo series documenting a suicide jump: "Die N.Y. Times zeigt uns in drei Fotos, wie er sich zu Tode stürzte; sie nennt die Filmsorte, die sie benutzte, sie gibt die Belichtungszeiten. Als Gebrauchsanweisung?" (IV, 1777).

Gesine is not alone in her fascination with photos. Marie keeps a scrapbook filled with them (I, 29), often cutting out three and four photos at a time: "Die ausgeschnittenen photographischen Bilder, oftmals Anlaß zu Diskussionen mit ihrer Mutter, liefern dem "Kind" Vorstellungsbilder, aufzubewahrende Beweisstücke des täglichen Lebens in New York."[46] Some of the pictures denote morbid images of war and death: "Auf einer zersplitterten Straße liegt vorn neben einem gummibereiften Handkarren ein Mensch still in einer Haltung, die er im Schlafen nicht einen Augenblick aushalten würde" (II, 688). Others, such as those of the Johnson family and their daughter's wedding, simply catch her fancy.

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[46] Fahlke and Zetzsche 78.

In the early part of 1968, the war of attrition against North Vietnam was considered at a standstill. However, two major events brought this phase to an abrupt end. The Battle of Khe Sanh and the Tet Offensive, separated by only ten days, together mark a crucial turning point in the war both militarily and domestically. The rosy picture painted by government and military leaders as to American superiority and the impression of steady progress toward victory were shown to be patently false. In late January and early February, American military forces, despite the overwhelming numerical and technological advantages, were shown to be profoundly lacking when stacked up against the dedication and perseverance of the North Vietnamese, who were determined to prevail regardless of the human cost.

The heavily fortified Marine stronghold at Khe Sanh came under attack on January 21, 1967. The site was of paramount tactical importance as a staging point for strikes along the Ho Chi Minh Trial, a major supply artery for enemy forces. The siege dragged on for three bloody months. Although heavily outnumbered, the Americans were well supplied and were backed up by massive and frequent B-52 bombing forays. In April, the Americans finally emerged as the questionable victors at Khe Sanh. In the final tally, the 205 American lives seem negligible when compared with Vietnamese losses of 10,000 to 15,000. The media pounced upon marked similarities with the 1954 French debacle at Dienbienphu, which signaled the beginning of the end of their presence as a colonial power in Indochina. The similarities between the two were lost neither on the Johnson administration nor on the media, whose perception of the situation at Khe Sanh were pessimistic from the outset. This attitude was broadcast nightly into living rooms across America.

In Jahrestage, the onset of the siege at Khe Sanh receives only perfunctory notice. The entry on January 22 opens with a follow-up to the Eartha Kitt incident at the White House a few days prior, followed by a two sentence summary of war news:

> 18 Tote der U.S.A., mindestens 25 Tote Nord-Viet Nams bei den Kämpfen um Höhe 861 bei Khesanh. 21 Holzfäller Süd-Viet Nams getötet durch amerikanischen Artillerie- und Flugzeugbeschuß, weil sie in einem Gebiet arbeiten, wo jeder Mensch als Freiwild gilt. (II, 627)

The first sentence is typical of "body count" items. It is factual, concise and impersonal in tone. There is little importance placed on the battle for Hill 861, instead it focuses on a second incident. The brief account of this incident differs significantly in both content and tone. Unlike the preceding sentence, the narrator is clearly sympathetic to innocent peasants who were unluckily working that day in a shooting range. Here again, Johnson --in the guise of Gesine--clearly manipulates the narrative to convey his own political convictions. Military losses can be reported factually and objectively, whereas civilian casualties can and should not be. This conclusion is backed up by an examination of the original materials.

Some key differences between the two portrayals of Khe Sanh at this very preliminary stage are of interest. While both accounts begin with the number of American dead, Johnson substitutes "mindestens" for the Time's more neutral "incomplete count." Johnson also makes no mentions of the Marines, but does mention Hill 861 (later synonymous with the Battle for Khe Sanh),which appears six paragraphs into Tom Buckley's special report. The second incident with the civilians comes from another page

entirely, and is buried at the end of a longer report on other battle activity not associated with Khe Sanh.

The portrayal of events in The New York Times, is predictably quite different. The Khe Sanh item appears in the front page layout's priority position at the head of column eight, with the headline "18 Marines Killed As Enemy Shells Camp Near Laos." In this initial report, however, there is little else to distinguish it from other war reports appearing in previous weeks. The headline is of standard size, and the highlights are summarized in three sub-headlines. In context of the day's events it only just beats out other competing headlines by virtue of its position in the layout. But the significance of Khe Sanh is apparent neither in the narrative nor in the Times. In the following days the paper is filled with reports out of Vietnam, but Gesine gives the impression that relatively little is happening. There is no other mention of the siege until February 8, well after the beginning of Tet.

In early 1968 a cease-fire had been announced for the observation of Tet, the Vietnamese lunar new year. Yet on January 29, 1968 North Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap began a massive offensive campaign against more than 100 cities and villages in South Vietnam. It was a calculated attempt to reverse the course of the war. For weeks intense fighting continued in and around Saigon. Despite some initial successes, the North Vietnamese were quickly forced to abandon most of the territory they had taken in the first few days of fighting. They lost the battle but achieved a more important objective. The toll on the American psyche was enormous:

> Tet was a disaster for U.S. policy because it told U.S. citizens that the North Vietnamese were not about to give up and that they were prepared to pay

> dearly to obtain the withdrawal of U.S. forces. The U.S. foreign policy goal was to have the North Vietnamese decide to stop their intervention in the South. Tet convinced most U.S. citizens that the goal was unobtainable. Even though the NVA-VC did not get the military victory they wanted, they got the political impact they needed to obtain their goal.[47]

The real story of Tet was that of the war-weary American public: "If it hadn't been Tet, it would have been something else."[48] The Tet Offensive was significant primarily as a public relations fiasco. The public had been told by the administration via the national media that the war was going well, and that progress was being made on the ground. There was no reason to anticipate any change in the war's plodding pace. The public was not prepared psychologically for a major offensive. On January 21, Gesine reads in the paper:

> . . . die Regierung [hat] kurz vor Weihnachten einen stellvertretenden Staatssekretär für Verteidigung zu Senator Fulbright geschickt. . . . Er möge doch endlich aufhören, seinen Ausschuß für Auswärtige Beziehungen fragen zu lassen, ob 1964 tatsächlich U.S.-Zerstörer im Golf von Tonkin angegriffen wurden. Die Regierung habe ihre Beweise, und der Bombenkrieg seit dreieinhalb Jahren sei rechtens. Senator Fulbright ist immer noch nicht überzeugt. (II, 623)

The Tet Offensive caught the Johnson administration unprepared. Johnson failed to communicate any sense of control over the situation. However, the media is generally perceived as a major contributor to the ensuing dramatic shift in public opinion. Reports coming out of Vietnam during the initial days of the offensive showed severe fighting and high

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[47] Berry 145.

[48] Martin Mayer, Making News (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1993) 313.

losses for the Americans. Though things turned around rather quickly the later stories did not get the same sort of media attention:

> In reviewing effects of specific coverage, evidence can be found of major shifts in public opinion due to coverage. In January 1968, before the Tet offensive, 56 percent of the public identified themselves as hawks, 28 percent as doves; in March, after Tet, 41 percent identified themselves as hawks, 42 percent as doves. The erroneous media interpretation of Tet as a military disaster must have played a significant role in this shift.[49]

However, the report also points out that the public opposition to the war developed over a much longer period of time than during the Korean War, where there was very limited television coverage and more censorship by the military. According to the report: "Studies indicate that TV coverage simply followed the shift in public opinion, reflecting new national critical perceptions after the tide had turned."[50]

The evening news and the paper portrayed a version of the ground war totally at odds with what had been reported previously. Even those in the news business were shocked by reports coming out of Saigon. Walter Cronkite, "the most trusted man in America," was visibly upset. After a personal visit to South Vietnam he went on national television to advocate an immediate negotiated withdrawal of American troops.[51] Despite an eventual overall Tet victory, the American public was horrified by what it

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[49] Battle Lines. Report of the Twentieth Centry Fund Task Force on the Military and the Media (New York: Priority Press Publications, 1985) 11.

[50] Battle Lines 11.

[51] "To say that we are closer to victory today is to believe, in the face of the evidence, the optimists who have been wrong in the past. . . . It is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could" (Mayer, 174).

saw. The press, which had been kept away from battle sites and off bombing raids, suddenly found themselves on the front line as NVA and Viet Cong troops penetrated Saigon. These pictures were sent home uncensored.

The Vietnam War produced the most violent war images ever taken. Photographers played a distinctly different role during the Vietnam conflict compared to previous wars. They moved with relative freedom and with the cooperation of the military. Because the war dragged on for so many years, there was a large, sustained demand for news photographs and film: "[Photos] ceased to be a documentary record of events and became a commodity in themselves."[52] Peter Braestrup makes the point that, although television is generally perceived by both the public and the military establishment as the major contributor to antiwar sentiment, the photos generated during this period were "just as integral in public memory."[53]

Gesine's first mention of the Tet Offensive comes at the end of a passage describing the "ernsthaftenen bedächtigten" Sen. Fulbright, then seeking a concrete resolution to the Tonkin matter (II, 662). Initial reports out of Saigon were sketchy and inaccurate. The embassy was never in Viet Cong possession, contrary to initial reports. There is no further comment on the story that dominates the news that day. Gesine instead turns her attention to the past. As in the American press, there is never any attempt to redress the inaccuracy of this initial report. No war news is mentioned the following day.

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[52] Jorge Lewinski, The Camera at War (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978) 201.

[53] Peter Braestrup, "An Extreme Case," The American Experience in Vietnam. A Reader, ed. Grace Sevy (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989).

The February 1 entry consists of a single paragraph. It is a rather lengthy, factual item concerning the rape and murder of a young mother (II, 668-9). Gesine does not otherwise comment. When pressed on this point by Manfred Durzak, Johnson gives some possible reasons for Gesine's complete withdrawal in entries which consist entirely of New York Times items either in copyrighted or uncopyrighted form:

> . . . das ist ein Smoke-screen, das sind die Tage, an denen Sachen drin sind, Sachen dran sind, über die sie nicht reden möchte. Oder Tage, an denen das, was dort in der Zeitung steht, sie dermaßen überwältigt als Wirklichkeit der USA, daß sie glaubt, an diesem Tag nichts mehr sagen zu müssen. Das reicht. Da braucht sie keine Zusätze zu machen, das ist das. Hier lebe ich, und das ist das.[54]

The next day Gesine has a great deal to say, but not specifically about the Tet offensive. Instead, she incorporates the series "Street Scene" into a general discussion of memory and forgetting.

The series produced one of the best known images in history. Former Marine combat photographer Eddie Adams was in Saigon with the Associated Press when the Tet Offensive began. Quite by chance he witnessed a perfunctory street execution which became *the* image of the Tet Offensive, and subsequently of the Vietnam War, in the minds of the American public: "It may have been one of the most important gunshots of the war, not because it was heard around the world, but because it was seen."[55] Adams was not the only photographer on the scene, but his pictures were the first to reach the States. The images brought him the Pulitzer Prize that year for Spot News Photography, despite his own

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[54] Durzak, "Dieser langsame Weg zu einer größeren Genauigkeit" 447-8.

[55] Harry N. Abrams, The Instant it Happened (New York: Associated Press, 1976) 200.

contention that "any idiot could have taken it."[56] The photo, which ran on the front page of both The New York Times and The Washington Post, was spread across half the paper. The New York Times also ran the full three picture series on page twelve, which Oberdorfer calls "a gesture extremely rare for the Times."[57] On NBC the "Huntley-Brinkley Report" ran stills of the series. Their big scoop would come the next night.

At home the incident took on a life of its own far removed from the streets of Saigon. The most immediate effect was that it upstaged the summary of General Westmoreland's press conference which ran in the outside column. His outline of the American retaliatory campaign, as well as his attempt to put the events of the previous few days into perspective, went all but unnoticed.[58] The headline in The Washington Post read: "CLASHES PERSIST IN VIET CITIES; GENERAL WARNS OF DMZ PUSH."

In an unusual passage in Jahrestage, the "Street Scene" series becomes a quintessential image of war and death for both Gesine and Marie. In most other instances their interests are quite different. The items and photos that Gesine comments on in her news summaries are rarely the same ones that Marie includes in her own scrapbook. It is also

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[56] Abrams 200. He describes the scene: "Loan gave no indication that he was going to shoot the prisoner until he did it. As his hand came up with the revolver so did my camera but I still didn't expect him to shoot."

[57] Don Oberdorfer, Tet! (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1971) 166.

[58] Secretary of State Rusk was beside himself when the Huntley-Brinkley Report ran the video clip on February 2 for an estimated viewing audience of 20 million. At a State Department press meeting he lashed out at reporters: "Whose side are you on? None of your papers or your broadcasting apparatuses are worth a damn unless the United States succeeds. . . . I don't know why, to win a Pulitzer Prize, people have to go probing for the things that one can bitch about when there are two thousand stories on the same day about things that are more constructive in character." Oberdorfer 170-1.

unusual in that three different versions are mentioned in the text, each of which had a tremendous impact on the American public. Albin contends that "darüberhinaus eine indirekte Auseinandersetzung mit dem Medium New York Times statt[findet]."[59] He bases his conclusion on the "äußerlich undramatisch" character of the photo series, into which Gesine is forced to project her own interpretation, and thereby fictionalize the event.[60] He considers the accompanying captions unnecessary, arguing that they reduce the scenes horrific impact. What Albin fails to take into account is that, for the American public, the photo series transcended both the medium and the paper. Gesine's reaction is not directed against the paper but against the war itself.

Significantly, Gesine refers not to the front page photo, but to the entire three picture series on page twelve: "Jenen Vorgang in drei Phasen" (II, 672). The photos comprise a narrative which Gesine paraphrases for Marie and the reader. She begins by renaming the series: "Die Erschießung. - (Die Ermordung. Ich will gar keinen Streit.)" The first and final images are described in emotionally descriptive language. The Viet Cong officer "sieht nach Freizeit aus" as he talks without anger to a soldier (II, 672). From the outset she surmises that his hands are "vielleicht gebunden." The second picture, which includes the paper's note "Die Hinrichtung," is described clinically. Gesine's description is at first unclear, but then becomes more concrete, similar to Adams' own version of the events as they unfolded. The moment of impact registers when she realizes he makes no move to defend himself: "Die Hände auf dem Rücken, gewiß gefesselt." The accompanying newspaper text, "Das Gesicht zeigt

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[59] Albin 209.

[60] Albin 210.

den Einschlag des Geschosses," is unecessary. This becomes a universal image for all other murders. For Gesine, Marie and an entire nation it also becomes the representative image of the Vietnam War. The description of the final shot in the sequence is again interpretive: "Das Opfer liegt auf der Straße, die nackten Beine sinnlos angewinkelt" (II, 673). The victim is hardly present in her description of the shooting and has seemingly ceased to exist. Instead her attention is focused on the Vietnamese general and a man in the background. The latter, an American soldier, is a witness along with the camera. He is slightly turned toward the action, "jedoch nicht, als wolle er eingreifen" (II, 673).

Gesine, along with most of the American public, had never seen someone shot before. Now there is no question as to what happens or how it looks. The image becomes representative of every gunshot:

> - Wenn in deiner Erzählung jemand erschossen wird, brauchst du es mir nun nicht mehr zu beschreiben, Gesine.
> - Es kann auch anders zugehen, Marie.
> - Aber wenn du in deiner Geschichte jemand erschießen läßt, werde ich wissen, woran du dabei denkst, und auch daran denken. Wolltest du das?
> - Das auch. (II, 673)

In some instances photographs become inseparable from memory and history. Gesine can trace her own initial exposure of Nazi atrocity to a single photograph published in the local paper after the war:

> Das Schockmittel war eine Fotografie, die die Briten im Konzentrationslager Bergen-Belsen gemacht hatten und abdruckten in der Zeitung, die sie nach dem Krieg in Lübeck laufen ließen. Die Wirkung hat bis heute nicht aufgehört. Betroffen war die eigene Person: ich bin das Kind eines Vaters, der von der planmäßigen Ermordung der Juden gewußt hat. Betroffen war die eigene Gruppe: ich mag zwölf Jahre alt sein, ich gehöre zu einer nationalen Gruppe, die eine andere Gruppe

> abgeschlachtet hat in zu großer Zahl (einem Kind wäre schon ein einziges Opfer als Anblick zuviel gewesen). Der Schock kann nachgewiesen werden an der Verkrüppelung von Reaktionen. (I, 232)

For Gesine, the photos from Bergen-Belsen thus become synonymous not only with genocide across Germany, but are also from that moment forward an unavoidable aspect of her identity. The photo is symbolic of the transformation of all relationships, history and self in post-Nazi Germany.

In the late 1960s the war affected every aspect of American life. Even Gesine, as a foreigner, was constantly confronted with the issue. In the novel, its dominance of national consciousness is conveyed through the pages of The New York Times. In turn, its effect on Gesine is problematic and profound. The issue's importance is clearly established in the novel's opening pages. Its prominence is sustained through the first ten months of Gesine's year-long "Vertrag" with the author. Beyond the inclusion of news items pertaining to the war, many of the figures in Jahrestage exhibit a specific relationship to the theme of war, and especially the Vietnam War.[61] Gesine's preoccupation with the issue is ongoing in Jahrestage, and reaches a culmination in volume four, shortly before her departure for Czechoslovakia.

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[61] War and its consequences, as well as perceptions and attitudes, are prominent themes in Jahrestage. In Gesine's reconstruction of her past, the frame of reference is naturally WW II. Every aspect of life in Jerichow is impacted by national politics. In some instances those lives are disrupted and destroyed, such as the Jewish Semsig and Methfessel families. In New York, Gesine's friends and acquaintances represent an entire continuum of war experiences. Included WW II survivors such as Gesine's neighbor, Mrs. Ferwalter, and her Czech instructor, Anatol Kreslil, along with an assortment of people who are impacted in various ways by the Vietnam War such as Marie's pediatrician, Dr. Williams, and Gesine's friend, Annie Fleury, whose anti-war convictions prompt her to leave her husband whose views are irreconcilable with hers: ". . . sie will aus einer Ehe mit F.F. Fleury weglaufen, wegen Viet Nam" (II, 565).

Johnson's coverage of the Vietnam War during the spring and early summer of 1968 is commensurate with actual press coverage. The war stagnated in the aftermath of Tet, followed by the cessation of bombing in North Vietnam at the end of March. While the war does not disappear from the front page of The New York Times entirely, it does for the first time face real competition for Gesine's attention in the form of the Prague Spring.

When The New York Times leaked news of Westmoreland's plan to deploy an additional 206,00 troops in Vietnam on March 10, 1968, the public outcry was enormous. Gesine does not refer to this incident directly, although the original article is included in Johnson's scrapbook. The headline, which spans three columns in extra-large type, cannot be missed: "WESTMORELAND REQUESTS 206,000 MORE MEN, STIRRING DEBATE IN ADMINISTRATION."[62] She is instead concerned with reports of unrest in Czechoslovakia, the DDR and Poland. The next day there are only oblique references to what quickly developed into a raging national debate about the future of U.S. military engagement in Vietnam: "Nach der Meinung der Fernsehstation N.B.C. [i.e. Huntley-Brinkley] ist der Krieg in Viet Nam verloren. Nach der Meinung des Nachrichtenmagazins Newsweek wird Präsident Johnson es mit dem Krieg in Viet Nam nicht schaffen" (II, 852). Gesine does not mention the incident until one week later when Johnson is forced to back down:

> Der Präsident hat sich gegen die Bankiers entschieden. Zwar schickt er nach Viet Nam nicht die 206 000 Soldaten, die sein Westmoreland bestellt hatte, doch immerhin 35 000 oder 50 000. (II, 878)

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[62] New York Times 10 Mar. 1968: A1.

Gesine sees evidence that the antiwar movement has shifted into the mainstream, although she does not mention any of the numerous post-Tet polls. A demonstration at Columbia University draws more than 3500 students and another 100 professors: "Ein verblüffter Mann aus der Verwaltung: Meine Güte, so viele mit Schlips und Jacke habe ich noch nie gesehen. Sind ja Herren" (II, 863). In the aftermath of Tet, public opinion has begun to determine administrative policy--instead of following it. Johnson was forced to admit publicly that his war strategy was a failure. On March 31 he announced that he would not seek a second term in the White House, and would bring a halt to bombing raids against North Vietnam. He would use his remaining time in office to bring about a cease fire. Marie takes him at his word, and regrets missing the live television broadcast: "Der Krieg ist aus. . . . Sie hätte es gern mit eigenen Augen gesehen, wie die Welt in Ordnung gebracht wird" (II, 938). Gesine, the veteran of four political systems, is more pessimistic: "Fast alle haben es anders verstanden" (II, 938). She identifies much more closely with The New York Time's assessment of Johnson's motivations the next day than the idealistic, almost reverent, reactions of her friends:

> Die New York Times gibt dem Präsidenten für seinen Verzicht drei große Schlagzeilen über alle acht Spalten, als sei er gestorben. Sie hat Tränen in seinen Augen beobachtet. Und wenn sie eine Meinung sagen soll, so hält sie viele für möglich: daß es ihn noch mehr darum ging, nicht zu verlieren, weder in der Partei noch in der Wahl. . . . Wie nenne die Times den Krieg: "Furchtbar, grausam und widerwärtig--den Krieg, den Keiner will." (II, 941)

Gesine finds the plurality of opinion, however confusing, infinitely preferable to the canned communist version of the speech broadcast by

Radio Moscow. Their report announces the end of the bombing of North Vietnam but neglects to mention that the president will be stepping down at the end of his term: "Dort wird die Wahrheit ausgegeben wie eine Medizin, und zwar nach Belieben" (II, 941).

During February and March 1968, Gesine's political stance changes significantly, commensurate with the changes in the U.S. brought about by the Khe Sanh siege and the Tet Offensive. This marks the beginning of a marked trend toward political engagement as her plans for Prague solidify. When earlier the previous fall she did not attend the antiwar demonstration in Washington, she justified her political passivity: *"Die Politik des Präsidenten in Viet Nam wird nicht durch die Proteste von Minderheiten geändert. . . . Die Politik des Präsidenten wird nicht einmal vom Präsidenten entschieden"* (I, 207-7). Events in the U.S. are crucial in sparking renewed belief that individual action can effect profound political change.

It is readily apparent in the detailed analysis of New York Times items from both articles and photos included in the narrative that the influence of Gesine's interests and character results in a marked difference between documentary and textual versions of news events. The items appear to be randomly organized within the narrative, but in fact adhere to a readily discernible agenda of interest. The illusion of a loose associative web between thematic elements is dispelled by a close comparison of the original source with its narrative counterpart. There are also significant differences in word choice and the selection of information. The subtle manipulation of language results in significant differences in the textual version. In the case of many items it is hardly credible, given their placement within the paper itself, that Gesine simply strung together

a series of impressions as she ostensibly skims the news. News photos are also selected as they fit her interests. Compared to the news items, they are often described in evocative, dramatic terms. In many instances it is clear that they provoke an emotional response from Gesine. Her interpretations of these documentary materials are unequivocally subjective. In Jahrestage as a whole, the characterization of Gesine's reading of The New York Times as an objective reflection of contemporary reality assumed by many critics is inaccurate.

What emerges in the comparison of original New York Times items and their textual realization in Jahrestage is the extent of Johnson's manipulation of the originals. This goes beyond citation, a combination of fact and commentary, or even Krätzer's characterization of the paper, which "als Informationsträger ein wichtiger Stellenwert für den politisch-gesellschaftlichen Meinungsbildungenprozeß Gesines zukommt."[63] The items, as characterized by Bauschinger are a reflection of her interests and concerns: "Johnson zitiert nur sehr Ausgewähltes aus der *New York Times* und wahrscheinlich das, was Gesine Cresspahl auch liest und bemerkenswert findet."[64] These characterizations, as well as those cited earlier, do not address the essential function of the items in the narrative. The New York Times items do not indicate Gesine is in any way coming to terms with the sociopolitical situation in the U.S. Her opinions are preformed. There is little in these passages to show anything but a substantiation of her preconceived political ideas. This is apparent both in the limited agenda of topics she follows in the course of the year, in the actual articles incorporated in the narrative, as well as in the textual

[63] Krätzer 100.

[64] Bauschinger 390.

transformation of individual items. She herself changes little in the course of the novel, realizing only that her stay in the U.S. is coming to an end. Major news events portrayed in Jahrestage's third volume, such as the King assassination and the Tet Offensive, only cement Gesine's conclusion that, for political and moral reasons, the U.S. is not an appropriate political alternative. In the final volume, Johnson ties up loose ends for his protagonist--personally and thematically--as she prepares to leave New York for another, more promising *alternative Wirlichkeit* represented by the Prague Spring.

CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION: "GESINE, DAS SOLLTE DEINE HEIMAT WERDEN!"

In the final volume of Jahrestage, Gesine's relationship to the present is markedly different, as changes in her attitude during the early spring begin to manifest themselves. Most obviously, references to New York, Vietnam, crime, racial tensions, international politics and other contemporary events, which form the structural and thematic framework of the novel in the first three volumes, become noticeably less prominent. This is reflected in her increasing preoccupation with the past and concern for the future, which eclipses the political and social issues that dominate the U.S. during 1968. Heinz Osterle ascribes to Johnson a "darkening of vision,"[1] as Gesine's references to contemporary events seem to signal impending doom:

> Die tschechoslowakische und sozialistische Sache, entgegen deinen Voraussagen, sie scheint zu laufen. Denn die Ostdeutschen haben angefangen, in der C.S.S.R. "gegenrevolutionäre Kräfte" zu erblicken, und sie warnen nachdrücklich vor "spontaner Demokratisierung" und Forderungen nach "sozial-politischen Veränderungen." Laß mich das Ende davon sehen. (1, 866)

Her wish is in fact realized, but in a wholly unanticipated way. In more veiled passages, she manages to mention two suicides reported in The New

[1] Osterle, "A Lost Utopia?" 68

> die feinsten Änderungen, ist ein einziges Memorial von Schuld und Versagen.[10]

The novel's final volume is widely understood as the cornerstone of Johnson's portrayal of twentieth century German history.

In the context of the novel as a whole, Johnson's concluding volume has been consistently targeted as inconsistent and problematic because of the reduced role of the U.S and The New York Times. Ziolkowski states in his infamous review:

> Johnson's interest in his story seems to peter out as soon as Gesine leaves East Germany. All the events of 1953 to 1967 are summarized breathlessly during the final three-day talkathon. Even Gesine's politically naive enthusiasm for the "Prague Spring" ends with an anticlimax since her story stops on Aug. 20, the eve of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia.[11]

While there is some fall-off, the perception is skewed somewhat by the relationship of the period covered in this volume in proportion to the rest of the text.[12] It is comparable in length to the previous volumes but covers only the final two months of the twelve documented in the course of the narrative. It is in these last few weeks that news items from The New York Times do become somewhat less frequent, before becoming once again quite

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[10] Fritz Raddatz, "Ein Abschied von Uwe Johnson." Zeit 20 Jul. 1984: 31.

[11] Ziolkowski 61.

[12] In an interview with Johnson, Durzak pointedly asks if unfavorable reviews played any role in the reduced role of The New York Times in the third volume. Johnson challenges him on this perception, and asks if Durzak can actually prove that there are fewer newspaper items: "Das würde ich an Ihrer Stelle mal tun, dann würden Sie es nicht mehr sagen" (Durzak, "Dieser langsame Weg zu einer größeren Genauigkeit" 456). In my own survey of The New York Times' role in the last volume, based on frequency of mention per entry only, the numerical reduction from week to week is not that significant and is in fact comparable to other week-long periods in the first three volumes.

prominent during the closing days of Gesine's stay in the U.S. The most noticeable change is a shift in proportion within the entries themselves. Contemporary passages are comparatively more succinct, while the Jerichow story takes up long, interrupted sections. It is the latter that accounts for the perceived abandonment of the New York story.

The decidedly darker cast in the closing weeks of the narrative is due in part to the timing of Gesine's trip to Prague. Johnson, in his usual manner, denies that events lying outside the novel's well-defined temporal parameters are influential:

> Das Ende ist eigentlich nicht offen. Sie befindet sich auf dem Flug nach Prag. Das ergibt der Kontext. Aber was am nächsten Tag in Prag passiert ist, das hat, glaube ich die Weltgeschichte angehalten. Ich habe im Juli 1967 angefangen, meine Komposition zu erarbeiten, um im Januar 1968, sie aufzuschreiben. Es war eine Art gemeinsamer Arbeit zwischen mir und Gesine, in der Gesines Wirklichkeit geschildert werden sollte. Der 20. August war unberuflich das letzte Datum. Wenn da etwas offen gelassen wurde, dann tat das die Wirklichkeit. Das (d.h. die russische Invasion in der Tschechoslowakei) war nicht meine Idee oder mein Schlußgedanke.[13]

What has come to be known as Jahrestage's defining event, which is not part of the novel at all, is according to Johnson purely a function of his chosen material. This seems rather hard to believe, however, given the dominant role of the Prague Spring and the increasingly pessimistic tone in the last volume. Fickert, for one, takes Johnson at his word and attempts to interpret the novel in a positive light:

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13 Osterle, "Strukturfragen und Todesgedanken" 581.

> . . . the reader will be aware that the openness of its ending signifies reconciliation and hope. The expectation that a land of moral probity exists,which Gesine, as the representative of the contemporary world's homeless wayfarers, can enter, is the author Johnson's legacy of hope to his readers. . . .[14]

Such an evaluation, however, rings hollow when Gesine's best political alternative is rendered unattainable from the outset.

The logical continuation of this analysis would be a thorough examination of New York Times items related to the Prague Spring, both in their original form and in their textual realizations. In light of Johnson's use of other contemporary topics such as the Vietnam War and racial tensions, which reveal his interpretative bias within the narrative, this kind of comparison would in all likelihood reveal something of his intentions concerning Gesine and her relationship to liberalization movement in Czechoslovakia. One preliminary observation is the inverted importance he gives to developments in Czechoslovakia throughout the novel. The news items, when they are not cited first, are invariably found in the opening section of the entries. Their placement in the narrative is rarely related to their actual spot in the original newspaper format. Often they are found on page three with other major international news or later, a fact which Gesine alludes to only once in the narrative:

> In Prag hört die New York Times das Gras nicht wachsen. Sie muß sich in Frankfurt zutragen lassen, daß die Antonin Novotny in der vorigen Woche seinem Zentralkommittee nicht freundlich von Antonín Novotny gesprochen hat und ihn nicht länger würdig glaubt, der Kommunistischen Partei der Tschechen und Slowaken vorzustehen. Aber die New York Times gibt diesem tschechoslowakischen Gras nur 27 Zeilen, wenn auch auf Seite 5; sie hält es wohl für ein kleines. (II, 523)

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[14] Fickert, Dialogue with the Reader 139.

Their placement does, however, reflect Johnson's own hierarchy of priority in his scrapbooks, where items documenting European events are normally cataloged between the daily news summary and the national news. Ironically, Gesine is critical of The New York Times for printing items she considers propaganda, and for implying their legitimacy by running them in a prominent slot:

> Das sollen wir glauben? Daß mehr als 300 tschechoslowakische Intellektuelle in der Welt um Hilfe bitten gegen die eigene Zensurbehörde, und in aller Welt den Schriftsteller John Steinbeck? Das glauben wir lieber nicht. Steinbeck hat den Krieg in Vietnam besucht, und es hat ihm dort nicht übel gefallen. Jedoch scheint die New York Times die Nachricht zu glauben und bringt sie auf Seite Eins. (I, 5)

She has, however, few other news sources. Information she receives through bank channels is equally slanted: "Du selber hast den Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, den R.G.W., wie du willst, du hast das einen Kindergarten genannt, Gesine" (II, 680). Her regular German source, Der Spiegel, does not run a single feature on Czechoslovakia during 1967/8 until June.

A second anticipated area of analysis is that of news content. As demonstrated by the above quote, the news from Prague is treated with skepticism, if not outright incredulity, from the outset. As with the reports out of North Vietnam and other communist countries, official versions of events in Czechoslovakia are necessarily suspect:

> Die kommunistische Partei in der C.S.S.R. hat die Regierung nun vollständig mit Leuten besetzt, die nicht Komplizen der Stalinisten waren. Der Innenminister, General Pavel, kennt die Gefängnisse des Landes aus mehreren Jahren von innen. Die Partei verlange überdies von sich selbst, der Staatssicherheitsdienst solle den Staat lediglich gegen Angriffe von außen

> schützen, und die Lösung von Fragen der Innenpolitik sei nicht seine Aufgabe. Es klingt wie aus einem Lehrbuch. (II, 973)

Since there are few other alternative sources of information, Gesine must fashion for herself a more probable version of events based on the information available and her personal experience with socialist systems. Her own analyses of political and financial developments for the bank, derived from both press releases and subtext, constitute another group of narratives quite different in character from The New York Times items and her personal reflections.[15]

While the focus of the final volume is on the Prague Spring and Gesine's early experiences under East German socialism, selected newspaper items substantiate Gesine's conclusions about the U.S. and its problems from earlier in the novel. Treatment of the two major topics reached their culmination in volume three. Discussion of race relations in the novel ended effectively with the assassination of Martin Luther King, where her interpretation of the photo showing his children at the coffin intimates the civil rights movement has been brought temporarily to an impasse. Coverage of the Vietnam War likewise peaks during the Tet Offensive and the subsequent antiwar shift in public opinion, although it remains a staple of the daily entries. Johnson's treatment of a third major theme, West Germany's failure at *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, is consistent throughout the novel. It becomes especially relevant as Gesine ties up loose ends in New York while preparing to leave for Czechoslovakia.

In Jahrestage's concluding volume the topic of Vietnam disappears for days at a time from Gesine's consciousness, although it is always on the

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[15] There are several examples in the text: III, 915-6; III, 927; III, 933; III, 980; III, 1037-9.

front page in one form or another. Variations on body counts, battle synopses and photo descriptions are still regularly included. Johnson's coverage of the Vietnam War in July and August 1968 is commensurate with actual press coverage. While the war does not disappear entirely from the front page of The New York Times, it does for the first time face real competition for Gesine's attention in the form of the Prague Spring. The shift in attention not only reflects a change in her priorities, but is also an accurate portrayal in the American public's attitude toward the war.

In the last two months of Jahrestage the role of Vietnam in the narrative changes markedly, as does the character of the articles themselves. It plays a noticeably more intimate and reinforcing role. This is made especially clear by the inclusion of a copyrighted translation of a feature article and the incorporation of Johnson's own essay on Vietnam, "Verhalten eines Protestierenden." Finally, on her last day in New York, Gesine reflects on her years in America, using the history of the U.S. in Vietnam as a referential timeline noting the the major events each year since her arrival: "Als wir ankamen, unterhielten die U.S.A. weniger als eintausend Berater in Süd Viet Nam" (IV, 1877). It is portrayed in the text as a sequence of events orchestrated to result in American intervention. Though there was no demonstrable damage during the Gulf of Tonkin incident, President Johnson pressured Congress to give him "freie Hand." The Marines landed in 1965 "ohne Kriegserklärung." Developments in Vietnam during 1967/8 indicate a continued downward spiral:

> 1967 fing es an mit dem chemischen Entlauben der Wälder von Viet Nam. Damit ich dich besser bomben kann. Einen Luftwaffengeneral haben die Amerikaner zum Verbündeten, der nennt als sein politisches Vorbild Adolf Hitler. Nach der Tet-Offensive der Kommunisten vom März 1968 bekannte ein amerikanischer Präsident sich zu seinen Fehlern; L.B.J. verzichtete auf eine neue

> Kandidatur. Sein Nachfolger könnte ein Nixon werden, ein Tricky Dickie, nix on with him, der hat für 1968 als Motto verkündet, statt über die Niederlage der U.S.A. solle verhandelt werden, "wie wir noch mehr Druck für unseren Sieg ausüben können." Dem Bewußtsein schuldnaher Anwesenheit, das uns im Nacken saß den schmutzigen Algerienkrieg der Franzosen hindurch, von 1954 bis 1962, ihm ist die Last nur ausgewechselt. (IV, 1877-8)

It is significant that she selects this particular topic with which to chart her own New York history. Viewed in this context it is a failure.

Using Jahrestage as an example of his narrative philosophy Johnson claims "es kommt darauf an, Personen ihre Veränderungen und ihre Geschichte zu zeigen." What he aspires to "wäre das Bild von Entscheidungszwängen, Entscheidungsmechanismen, das wäre persönliches Leben von außen und innen verändert."[16] While the groundwork is laid through the incorporation of The New York Times and Gesine's own observations about the societies in which she has lived, by his own definition Gesine's development during the course of the novel is called into question. At the close of Jahrestage Gesine remains true to the pattern of action which has defined her political engagement up to this point: "Please proceed to the gate now. Begeben Sie sich zum Ausgang" (IV, 1887).

To adequately capture the scope and complexity of America's largest, most diverse city on the written page often proves an insurmountable challenge: "Gemeinsam ist an allen Erzählern der Versuch mit Hilfe irgendeines Instruments, mit einem bestimmten Hilfsmittel sich dieser überwältigenden Stadt zu bemächtigen, ihrer habhaft zu werden, um sie

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[16] Schmid 253-4.

reproduzieren und vermitteln zu können mit Worten."[17] From her vantage point of observer, Gesine is cognizant of the fundamental similarities between the old world and the new. During the twelve months of 1967/8 her daily routine, as well as of her perceptions the city and the Sixties, are inseparable from the newspaper. It is Gesine's first and best source of information. The contemporary events which fill the newspaper's front pages provide a thematic and narrative structure which defines both the parameters of her life in New York City and her effort to reconstruct her childhood. Although its function in the novel transcends that of documentary source, it is clearly used as a practical measure to convey the multi-faceted society of which she is a part. Without it most of the local and national issues thematicized in the novel would be inaccessible to Gesine.

Throughout the year chronicled in Jahrestage, domestic problems such as violence, urban crime, police brutality and racial conflict share the front page with major international news events. The novel ends on the eve of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia as Gesine and Marie head for Prague and a new chance at socialism. While Johnson has often been criticized for grounding his novel in a specific era, and addressing issues specific to a certain period of time, thirty years later these identical social and political issues still make headlines in The New York Times.

Although the newspaper is presented as an objective source within the novel, a closer examination of the original articles reveals how Johnson manipulates documentary materials to fit his narrative purpose. The narrative implies through both language and format that the cited

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[17] Sigrid Bauschinger, "Mythos Manhattan. Die Faszination einer Stadt," Amerika in der deutschen Literatur. Neue Welt--Nordamerika--USA, eds. Sigrid Bauschinger, Horst Denkler und Wilfried Malsch (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1975) 384.

newspapers items are accurate representations of the source material, when in fact they are highly edited versions of the original event. In numerous instances Johnson takes deliberate liberties with translation, juxtaposes elements from different articles, and places exaggerated emphasis on items buried in the depths of the paper. The result is a deliberately slanted version of the day's events, which, according to Johnson, is a function of the narrative process:

> Solange die Arbeit an einem literarischen Text dieser Art sich mit der Wahrheit befaßt, muß ihr Gegenstand also geprüft werden an zwei gegensätzlichen Tendenzen der Wahrheitsfindung. Einige einfache Fehlerquellen bei der Herstellung und Übermittlung von Information sind bekannt: da haben die Augenzeugen nicht genau hingesehen, was sie nicht gesehen haben, können sie nicht sagen. Sie erfinden etwas, was ihnen den Vorfall abzurunden scheint. Oder sie haben die Situation schlicht nach ihren gewohnten Bezugspunkten geordnet, die mögen privat sein oder von sektenhafter Moral oder parteipolitisch. . . . Sie schädigen alle die Realität. (BS, 11)

The narrator, in the role of observer, is subject to these same tendencies. Thus, in Jahrestage highly crafted and seamless versions of news items are presented as apparently objective documentary material, while the presentation, relevance and impact are orchestrated by the narrator.

Johnson's political and social ideologies, which are not stated directly in the text itself, emerge clearly in the comparison between Jahrestage and The New York Times. An optical trick leads Gesine to ironically reconsiders newspaper's famous slogan:

> All the news verspricht die Schrift an der Fabrik der New York Times auf der Westseite, auf die man auf der Schnellstraße am Fluß in nördlicher Richtung zufährt. Sämtliche Nachrichten verspricht sie, und erst allmählich rückte die Einschränkung ins Sichtfeld der Windschutzscheibe: That's Fit to Print. Es ist kaum zu

> übersetzen, nicht einmal ins Amerikanische, wie denn Nachrichten beschaffen sein müssen, damit die New York Times sie druckt: geeignet, schicklich, tauglich oder was sonst. (I, 176)

The message broadcast by the sign's rotation seems symbolic of the paper's editorial practice. The novel's critics have generally sided with Gesine's contention that The New York Times paper is not all that different from the local communist weekly, whose slogan could be "All the News that fits the Line." Both the newspaper and Johnson have specific agendas in determining "all the news fit to print." What she fails to recognize is the impact of her own selective criteria. By and large the newspaper items which appear in Jahrestage are those which substantiate her own world view. Gesine's restatement of news events can be seen as yet another variation on the slogan: "All the News That Fits."

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I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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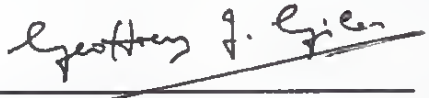

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This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of German and Slavic Languages and Literatures in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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